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IN THE TRACK OF THE MOORS

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CINTRA—THE SUMMER PALACE OF THE KING OF PORTUGAL.

IN THE
HALL OF THE MOONS

AND THE IN SPAIN AND NORTHERN AFRICA

BY
SYBIL FITZGERALD

WITH 63 ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR
AND MANY DRAWINGS
IN THE TEXT BY

AUGUSTINE
FITZGERALD



LONDON
WILLIAM BENTLEY & SONS, LTD.
NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.

1905



Figure 1: A painting of a landscape with a large tree on the right, a path leading up a hill, and a small building in the distance.

IN THE TRACK OF THE MOORS

SKETCHES IN SPAIN AND NORTHERN AFRICA

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IN THE TRACK OF THE MOORS

CHAPTER I

Impressions of Spain

“ Je ne sais pas de pays où la vie ait autant de saveur.”—BARRÈS.

IT is not as easy to enjoy Spain with idle pleasure as it is for the wanderer through Italy. Many a thought or question rises to disturb the surface curiosity in confronting for the first time this strange and, in its least hackneyed sense, romantic country. The legendic past, the rugged mystery of a dozen centuries ago, these may well be forgotten, and the field yet remain too vast. Coming for the first time into this once elastic land, meeting for the first time in their own streets the types which have changed so little since the great master painted and purchased for his melancholy king the glories of the Prado, the feeling of familiarity with an age which should have long disappeared seems out of place in our time. It is in us rather than in the scene of to-day, in the out-of-date legends and associations which still crowd about this land, for Madrid itself is the most modern town in the world and the Spanish people, in spite of Taine's verdict on the Spain of Madame d'Aulnoy's time, are the only people who, however profound or superficial their decline has been, have outlived the word decadence. Were it for this reason alone, the country's future *ought* to be assured,

but in witnessing Spain from the very midst of its strongly-marked types and illusive history, the words of Taine seem doubly true ; " *La racine des grands événements est toujours un caractère de peuple et l'histoire se ramène à la psychologie.*"

It is from no false sentiment that Spain seems still peopled with the creations of poets, the romantic heroes of the stage ; with the chivalrous Cid, with Gil Blas, with Victor Hugo's idealism or Byron's wild imagination. More than in any other country has an imaginary type been built up in Spain through literature, and the Spaniards themselves were the first to encourage in their drama an exalted rather than realistic language, an inflated idealism and overstrained heroism which gave to their stage at once so characteristic and stilted an atmosphere. So, when the "Michael Ange de la France" caught his magnificent inspiration from their school, he carried into his own imaginary creations something of the moral inflation popularised by the Spanish dramatists rather than of the genuine qualities of the people ; for the Spaniards, even of Louis XIV.'s time, when the Castilian language was a common accomplishment and everything Spanish was the rage in France, were still an unknown quantity, reserved and proud beings with farcical shadows.

So from Corneille's day on, the Spaniard as he really is has never been typified by foreign genius, even during that period of the last century when all the literary life of France seemed stirred anew by the stimulation of a vanished Spanish age, and when every poet sought to breathe into his poetry its proud atmosphere mingled with something of the old troubadour romance softened by far-off recollection. His pride, his gloom, his profound reserve, his bombastic courage and love of splendour, conspire to make him in literature a hero of imagination, and the first visit to Spain must bring with it a certain disillusion though it cannot disappoint. Far from that ; nothing in Spain



SUNSET AT TOLEDO.

ever disappoints. All stimulates to new ideas when the old associations clung to through traditions and glowing pages are lost.

The Spanish belong to a race that, however fallen its place among nations, has always inspired genius—a vital secret of life that makes of its decay a mysterious agent in the workings of the mind. Much of this power of stirring the intellectual imagination of other lands comes from Spain itself, however, rather than from the people. The Spaniard is exalted by the peculiar scenery of his country, a scenery profoundly stimulating and in which he is framed darkly against the sky “like the cedar, patient of heat and cold, nourished on little, lofty and dark, unbending and incorruptible.” It is in the landscape that lies hidden the great soul of the past, for did it not seem too crude a paradox, one might almost declare that the Spanish people themselves had never been great in the true sense, in spite of the century during which their territory stretched from the new world to the Netherlands. Can greatness express itself through pure fanaticism, through crusades carried out so fanatically that at the end of a century and a half Spain fell prostrate at the feet of Europe?¹ And for what? For a religion that was surely gaining ground in their country and must inevitably have triumphed without the shedding of blood. That such a people in such a country should justify for long their so-called “decline,” seems curiously absurd; but until within our own time, if we sift apart Jewish and foreign influences, a profound indifference is found to the ideals that build up a fine nation by its own merits, or rather by its own pronounced tastes. The great men of Spain detach themselves with startling distinctness from their own race like stars from the night; and the immense growth of the country in the sixteenth century was as the outcome of the sway of magnificent sovereigns, those most splendid

¹ Taine.

kings whom, it is said, are made by the most wretched nations. The savage determination with which the religious struggle was carried on showed less of growth and progress in the race than the first symptoms of that extraordinary fanaticism which the Moors had undoubtedly imparted to the people they had conquered. Power in Spain extended more largely through individual ambition than through patriotic unity, and it required a monarch as bigoted and as determined as was Mohamed, a fanatical centralisator of authority, a military prophet whose army was foreign and whose famous fleet largely Genoese, to invade countries and wear his successes like borrowed jewels in a hollow crown while his people starved and their coffers stood empty. However interested the individual, or corrupt the government, the people have always conspired with, rather than against it ; with the building up of Empire rather than the building up of internal Spain, and few in the past have had the courage to say—

“Sir, no prince
Shall ruin Spain, and least of all her own.”

Nevertheless the Spaniard of no age is likely to admit that his country's empire-building was the cause of its decline. Rather has he continued to say: “From the time that we adopted a French family and French principles we began to decay ; and it is in vain that purblind politicians seek the germs of our corruption in America. Let us rather look to that country for regeneration ; there the Spaniard shoots up again ; there we perhaps may lay our bones at last.” But even this last chance is gone, and unburdened now of her Colonies, governed at last by a patriotic sovereign, Spain can turn to her economic future with untrammelled hands, and—though the question is still an open one—may not find herself wanting. But this new life is but of yesterday ; a prosperous regency, a purified court, and an opened-

up country of some thirty years is insufficient to change the languid characteristics of so tired a race, and to cure ills that the dust of ages still hides. A *coup-d'œil* of Spain remains in all justice what it was fifty years ago, and as the character of this arid peninsula differs from that of the lands to the east of him, the Spaniard himself seems cut off from certain traits broadly common to the rest of Europe. The vast tracts of his sunburnt land sparsely populated and stretching with wild savagery from the fastnesses of the Pyrenees seems to have divided his nature from the social warmth of intercourse such as in other countries of Europe palpably transforms a land as the years pass, so that France, Germany, or Italy of to-day would be scarcely recognisable to the eyes of a century ago. But since in the seventeenth century the Moriscos were finally expelled and the fertile land so long kept turned began to harden once more, the Spaniard has remained self-centred and unprogressive. There are many who firmly believe that Spain is but dormant and its energies still warm; that it is still the land of possibilities and its people full of promise; but this wave of latent life is only found in the North where the strong breezes of another country penetrate. Nothing can be imagined more self-centred within the gloom of pride and narrow interest than the Andalusians and even the Castilians of certain parts of Castile. They exhibit, in fact, all the characteristics of Northern Africa, of the stagnating life of the Moors, without the "blessing" of Islam. There seems to be in the southern Spaniard a hopeless tendency to procrastination, and this "thief of time" has set his seal fatally on Spain, exhausted by fruitless colonial enterprises and indisposed to learn lessons of any schoolmaster—even of that greatest teacher of all—War. Mañana is responsible for a curious inattention to matters in hand, and even in the Spanish Cortes a cultivated and gifted orator will often entertain the House at length upon some subject singularly remote from the bill under

discussion. Perfect form, happy quotations from the classics, and all the academic jewels of rhetoric, combine to give a polished solemnity to the debate, but of any connection between the speech and the question before the House there is none. Irrelevancy is one of the intellectual aspects of the race, the Andalusian in particular, and inability to see the obvious, an indisposition to grasp the matter in hand.

After the terrible struggle of the Cross with the still brilliant Crescent, and the underlying duel between the solid home life, the monogamy and strength of family blood ties against polygamy and Oriental languor, it is curious to note in what spirit the success and splendour, the victorious glory in which Spain then revelled, was interpreted. Unlike the Moors of Moorish greatness, the Spaniards showed no capacity for enjoying the fairer side of their success, the happy sunshine of culture which had so distinguished their African masters. On the contrary, a latent jealousy underlay their letters and art, imparting to them an otherwise unexplainable satire. The Spaniards of the North continued to carry on half unconsciously the eternal struggle of the Castilians against the "Moors" and the enchantment of Andalusia with the almost racial jealousy of the North for the South, from which all Castilian learning and culture had come. This total lack of the joyfulness of life, this racial gloom of spirit which still underlies the Spanish character and imparts itself to the most casual observer, has made of Spanish story since the fifteenth century a picture at once too magnificent and too terrible to attract the sympathies of the nineteenth. The gloom of history is ingrained in the people still, and from their great past they have brought none of the softness of Italian poetry, or the calm of philosophy, which veiled the corruption of the Renaissance and still casts such a halo over the land of Dante. Indeed, the contrast between these two wonderful countries is so remarkable that it must lie not only in the



TOLEDO—PUERTA DEL SOL.

countries themselves and their histories, but in the capacity for the enjoyment of life in the people. Whereas in Italy we find alongside with intellectual prosperity a contagious warmth and sunshine, in Spain we see its great day overshadowed by that curious gloom which confronted the Moors from the first, but never contaminated them. Certain it is that until this gloom of Spain was coloured by a growing enthusiasm for the age of the Moors and of their arts, followed by the belief that the tide was turning, and if not greatness as a nation, at least decided enlightenment was at hand, it remained too stern in sentiment to attract for pleasure only.

What it sprang from, this strange mental darkness, when and how the "amiga de noche" poisoned the people's blood and made of their most splendid age one of unmeasured *tristesse*, are questions as elusive as is the psychology of the Moors themselves. As far back as the days of Titus Levi and of Strabo they were "clothed in black," stoically silent, obstinate, unsociable and contemptuous of death. It was already, in fact, long ingrained in the race when the Arabs invaded Spain, and the words of the poet-king of Cordova bear witness to it with Oriental contempt :

"For the poor Christians the gloomy monasteries ; for ourselves let us keep the gardens, the harem, the baths and assembly halls rich with jasper and glittering stucco formed of hyacinths and illuminated by ever-burning lamps. For them the obscure cloisters, for us the fountains of silver and shady orange trees. For them the privations of a fortress life, for us the tranquil and soft existence of our pleasant palaces and smiling haunts. For them intolerant tyranny, for us a mild monarchy ; for them the ignorant ambitions of the people, for us the arts ; for them abstinence and martyrdom ; but let us enjoy the delights of friendship and of love in the fertile fields of beautiful Andalusia."

In these words lie the keynote to the Moorish and Andalusian characters, and we wonder how the Moors ever succeeded in

taking so firm a root in Spain if, as some think, there must ever be some common sympathy between a conquering and a conquered people, to hold them together.

We, too, of to-day, must turn to these Moorish spots, the alcazars, the old haunts, the gardens of Andalusia, in fact to wherever the Mohamedans lingered, if we would feel the artistic sunshine of Spain. It is not found in Gothic Spain, nor, so it seems to the writer, in the halo of art and letters and adventure of the Spanish Renaissance, which was centred in a few, a very few minds who bore the entire weight of the country's condensed genius, staggering under it as did Cervantes till he died, or as Velasquez did who compressed into a life robbed of a rightful score of years such an inexhaustible flow of power as might well crush the vitality from which it sprang. These two spirits of one age were as wells rather than fountains, within whose profound depths is reflected not the sunshine, but the vitality of a race in its rarest possibilities and most cynical gloom, for the first and last time.

The Spaniards have never worked the joyous sunshine of their land, mentally or artistically. Their love of colour has the fire of warm and glowing blood about it rather than sunlight. Their painters make it glow from within, not from the heat of the sun. Goya's faces would blush in the dark as in full sunlight, and to-day Spain has shown that that font of "sang vigoureux" is as warm as of old, and Zuloago still holds the secret of his country's colour and makes it glow upon the canvas where the sun itself would look pale.

So, if we linger through Spain, it must be in a different spirit than when in Italy, land of flicker and shade; searching not for beauty or the joyousness of beauty in their common sense as possessed by other fair countries, but for character which is Spain's own. It's individuality is so marked, the landscape and the people alike so fiercely contrasted to those of all other European lands,



A STREET IN TOLEDO.

that for a while the feeling of harmony is lost, yet in no other spot is that harmony between man and earth so wonderful as in Spain, and those Moors who found the secret of grafting their pleasure-loving tastes and homes upon so stern and proud a soil were in no ordinary degree adaptive.

The first view of the scenery as seen from the north is as a vast stretch of desert, a sea of gold and purples reaching to the sky. "Never," says Rusinol, "does Spain seem to me so vast as when seen from the 'rapide' from north to south."

There are certain impressions from a country encountered for the first time which seem, as it were, to strike to the very depths of the human soul; to take by storm and completely subjugate all its complex web of sympathies with nature and art, stirring at the same time dormant chords of some past consciousness. Perchance what has already passed into the general body of human culture has been inspired by the very skies and outlines of hills now beheld for the first time. Cervantes or De Vega may have had their share in attuning the mind for its first glimpse of Spanish country, or some dusky canvas of Velasquez or Murillo, or long-forgotten page of Calderon. Be this as it may, no stronger sensation of its kind can be found than in a first look out of the railway carriage upon the country as the Paris express rushes to Madrid. What an extraordinary contrast from the last look out the previous evening over the rolling meadows of France! A vast plain with a limitless sweep, as of some African desert, glitters in the morning sun. Here and there veritable oases of rock pines mark a strange pattern on its boundless front, fantastic as the trees in some landscape of Burne-Jones's canvas. In the vast and lonely country a group of peasants is silhouetted far away on a white road with the same distinctness as in Egypt. The borderland to the peninsula has been crossed in the night—the atmosphere of the true continent of Europe left behind—and a single *coup-d'œil* is sufficient

■

for the all-mastering force of the impression received. There is only one word for it—*Spain*, and the world behind melts away under the dazzling splendour of its hot African sky.

Ever so vainly may we try in after wanderings through the length and breadth of Spain to analyse the causes of such distinct emotions, to search the mountains and plains that nature may give up her ultimate secret. But whether under the mouldering



ON THE ROAD, TOLEDO.

walls of Tarragona, or watching the cathedral spires of Segovia kindled with the last rays of the setting sun ; whether in the tortuous streets of Toledo or the echoing halls of the Alhambra ; whether in the vast Moorish pile of Cordova or in the giant Gothic fantasy of Burgos, the intimate charm of this strange and fascinating country is equally impalpable, equally elusive, and it is, perhaps, the more alluring for this very reason.

Approach Toledo for the first time. Already an hour from Madrid, we have sunk back centuries as we pass arid treeless expanses, such as Doré dreamed of when he took in task the trail of the landscape of Cervantes. “*Le paysage de Tolède et la rive sont parmi les choses les plus tristes du monde,*” yet its sadness has in it a wild vitality which robs it of the inertia of melancholy. The slowly crawling train deposits one within half-

an-hour's walk of the market-place. But a step from the tiny station and the existence of railway is an anomaly. Take a seat on the omnibus drawn by jingling mules and the whole modernity of life seems at an end—to fall down the abyss of time with the first crack of the muleteer's whip. This is not our time, our century. The mind slips back to a mediæval setting as completely as though it had never left it. It is as the Canterbury pilgrims that Toledo is approached, and another frontier has been passed, the frontier of time. Slowly ascending the dusty road, the charm of a wondrous town site grows more and more intense. “*Dans cet âpre pays surchauffé, Tolède apparaît comme une image de l'exaltation dans la solitude, un cri dans le desert.*”¹ The river below gleams serpentine like a white ribbon through the plain, and entering beneath the gate of the bridge which spans the ravine, the portal of time is passed into the never-changing life of a spell-bound city. City of fable this, of royal legend and hidden treasures, of necromancers and haunts of occult science, of gems and crowns for brow of king and youthful princess, nameless and for ever unknown.

Was it not of this old bridge, athwart which a wild sweet mountain air sweeps, that the exquisite song is sung,—

“Vraiment la Reine eût près d'elle, été laide,
Quand vers le soir,
Elle passait sur le Pont de Tolède
En corset noir.
Un chapelet du temps de Charlemagne
Ornait son cou. . . .
Le vent qui vient à travers la montagne
Me rendra fou ! oui, me rendra fou !”

Across this bridge, beneath which groups of washerwomen are clustered, splashing their soapsuds round the curves of the river, and over which as the day falls herds of goats and laden

¹ Barrès.

donkeys pass lazily, flecked with the setting sun, how many heroes of romance have passed ; and of it how many ballads have been sung. Long after Toledo had fallen in the eleventh century, the native poets continued to voice their abuse of the Moorish knights, and praise of the Christian caballeros who had vanquished them. The spirit of all these ballads is the same, and the following is one of the oldest, dating from the fifteenth century,—

“ Within a tower is Sevilla,
(loftiest tower of Toledo)
Lovely is she as a vision,
Love itself had never seen her.
'Twixt the parapets outleaning
She saw the river banks of Tagus,
The far fields all dark with branches
Carpeted as though with flowers.
And by a wide road far beneath her
Saw a prancing knight come towards her,
Armed with all the arms of knighthood,
Riding on a piebald stallion,
Leading seven captured Moors,
And in chains Aberrajados.
In his conqueror's wake he followed,
—Dusky dog and Moor despised—
Clothed with torn unknightly garments,
On a steed worn out and limping.
Yet in countenance appearing
Dauntless warrior, though disguised.
Loudly he blasphemed Mohamed
In wild language and upbraiding,
All his bitter anger voicing.
'Stop,' he cried, 'O Christian mongrel,
Who, ere prisoner you made me,
Took my father yonder captive,
And, as well you know, my comrades ;
If thou'lt give me them in ransom,
Then will I in gold redeem them ;

If thou still refuseth freedom,
Die to-day, or be *my* captive.¹
On hearing this, then Paranzules
From his rearing steed leapt lightly,
Thrusting forth his shining lance blade,
To the Moor it seemed to glitter,
With such fury and such swiftness,
Such thrust of lightning all unparried,
That almost to the earth it felled him ;
At the very first encounter
Horse and Moor alike lay vanquished.
Then on the Moor his foot he planted,
And separated head from body.
After this had been accomplished,
Back into his saddle springing,
The knight rode proudly to Toledo.”²

Passing up the steep ascent, the Puerta del Sol is on the left, still in shadow, for the sun plays on it but lightly and for a brief while each day. Little is known of this splendid old gate which, together with the blocked-up Puerta Visagra, make two such landmarks in Toledo. They seem to belong to a transition style of Arab architecture of the eleventh century, rather than to the Arab-Byzantine, such as is seen in Cordova, Tarragona, and elsewhere. But in the Puerta Visagra, first built before 838, one sees various features older than in the Puerta del Sol, in which is already seen the arch with several lobes and the pointed arch found later in the Giralda of Seville in the twelfth century. It cannot have been completed later than the eleventh century, since Toledo fell in 1085² and in its present condition belongs only to the setting splendour of Moorish Toledo.

The architectural formation of an old town must have a certain influence over its progress with the times. A fortress

¹ Translated from *Collection de Romances Castellanos. Anteriores al Siglo XVII.* Duran.

² G. de Prangey.

town like Toledo, built above sweeping plains and surrounded with river and walls, rarely follows rapidly in the course of civilisation, and must look on inertly while the busy cities below, which in warlike times were of so much less importance, speed



INTERIOR OF HOUSE WHERE CERVANTES SOJOURNED.

ahead in progress. It would be difficult to imagine Toledo modernised. People visit it to-day as they would the toy towns of a Universal Exhibition, as we did the Vieux Paris of 1900, enjoying the sensation of age without its realism. The entire town of Toledo is as an enduring monument in Spain, and the very people who inhabit it are monumental in their efforts to keep in touch with the old-time sleepiness which now pervades it. Even the young

military element which is soon to pass into it will have to concede to the spirit of the place, for the character of an old and decayed city is as hard to transform as the character of some old-fashioned mind.

Like all Spanish towns, Toledo should be seen in the spring, when the cold interiors have been tempered by the radiant Spanish sunshine, when the almost universal poverty of the town has been thawed of its winter suffering, when every window is thrown open, and through every open window drifts the scent of flowers, of Neapolitan geraniums and roses. The flies are apt

to be trying, but the resignation with which the Toledans support them is not the least among their old-fashioned qualities. "Ah," said a Spaniard to me with a smile of resigned pride, after he had slapped his oiled head countless times, "those flies, they *cannot* resist."

It is in Toledo that the first impression of Spanish gloom is felt, underlying the apparently pleasant manner of the people. It is here, too, that is first felt that curiously slow and clinging stare with which the heavy eyes of men and women greet the stranger. It is at once repulsive and brutish, and utterly lacking in the vivacious curiosity of the Italians or the impertinent impudence of other races. In a land so saturated with pride of birth and monarchical institutions, socialistic ten-



A SHOP, TOLEDO.

dencies have developed almost entirely from religious fervour, which unites all men and makes them equal. Even among the good-natured poor there is a kind of implanted familiarity in their manner towards all the world which repels far more than it attracts. But one must learn as best one may to detect when the best intention prompts a gloomy aloofness or an unexpected ease, as for instance, when some old peasant will seat himself beside one on a wayside seat and accompany his unsolicited conversation with digs of labour-hardened elbows. A Spartan smile is not lost in

Spain, where a disdainful word would rouse a very flame of fury.

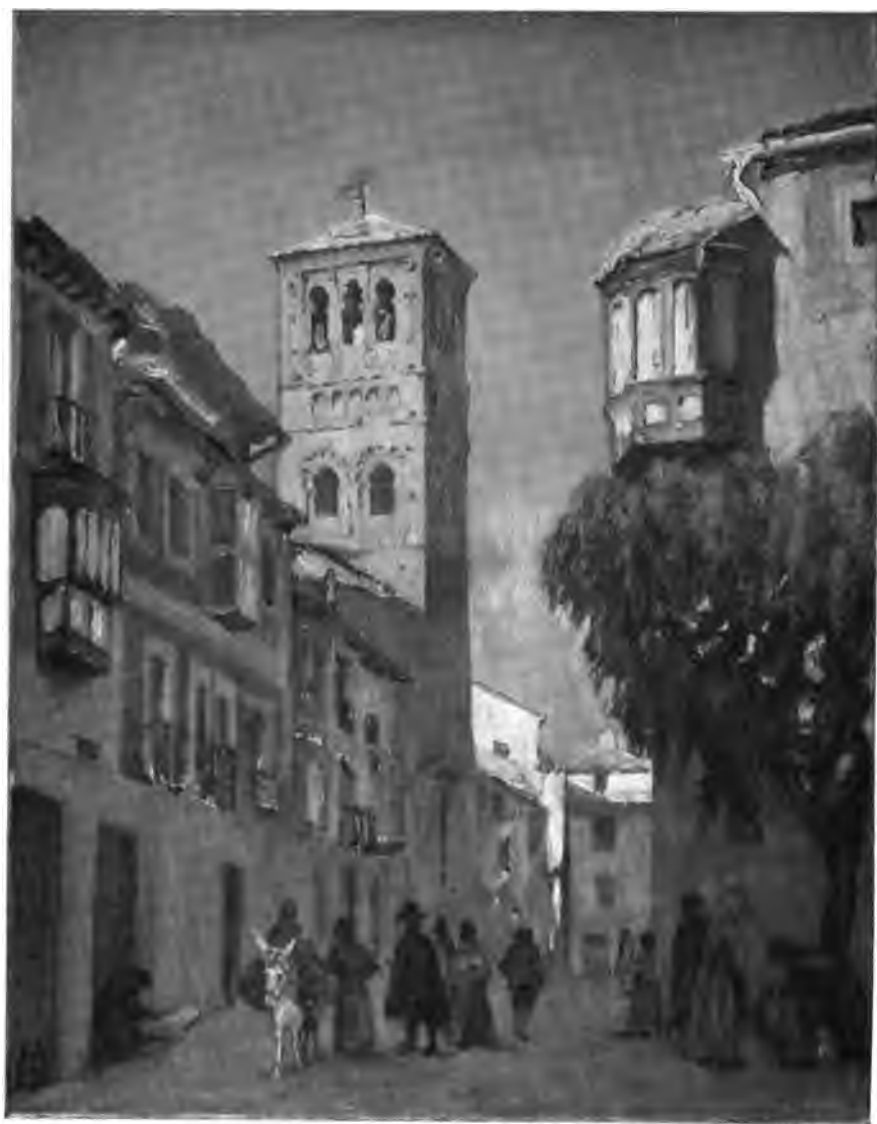
Spanish pride is hard to define. A Spaniard in London once remarked that if he asked his way in the streets, he was answered

with a kind of "pride of birthplace," as though any question on such a subject was worthy of the greatest attention. It must indeed have struck him as strange. In Spain, on the contrary, a query on the same subject rouses a contempt for whoever confesses ignorance of anything Spanish, and I know of no other nation that can so well interpret the old verb "to pride." Let the stranger who longs for a responsive smile and



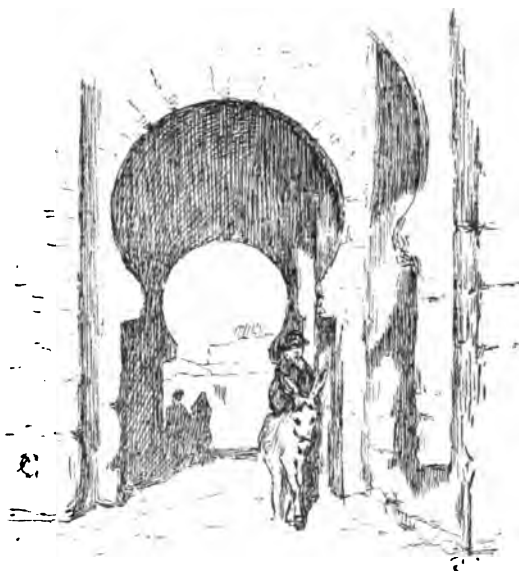
A DOORWAY, TOLEDO.

alert intelligence turn to the children of Spain, who seem so full of that pathetic vivacity which leads to no goal; let him get a child-guide who will point him out everything, good or bad, fair or foul, with lively impartiality, continually looking up at him with large dark eyes in which but the shadow of settled gloom has as yet penetrated. He need search for no better guide through the labyrinth of Toledo to all the sights of the city: to the Cloisters de los Reyes, white and flowering with harmonies of spring and discordant reliefs; to the old Taller of the Moors, where duenna-like old women



TOLEDO—A STREET SCENE.

sit and gossip in the afternoon during the desultory sale of milk and butter, while the hot sun works round the dusty stucco of the inner walls; to the Casa de Mesa, on which the Moors inscribed their exquisite lettering. He will guide as though he were the man, and his follower but a helpless child, through the casual goats, the pack-laden donkeys or persistent beggars, up side streets and secret alleys, naming with swift decision everything at which the stranger may happen to glance. "Señor, a dog;" "Señor, it is a cat"—or a trim ass, or whatever it be, his alertness roused by the firm belief in his companion's complete ignorance of everything under the sun. In the eager child it is a charm; in the man a stupid insularity.



GATEWAY, TOLEDO.

Moorish Toledo is far more attractive than the Gothic. Indeed the Gothic world of Spain as a whole is curiously uninspired, and often conveys the impression of a struggle against other influences, feebler but less clumsy. Nor are the interiors of Spanish churches sufficiently pure in harmony to throw off the destroying effects of overcharged ornaments and decoration, and we learn less of the Spaniard's philosophy of art by studying the interiors of his churches, than we do of the Italian's in his. Those of Spain and Naples alike are choked with details which refuse to be passed over, as though eager to emphasise the same curious lack of

sculpturesque spirit in the Spaniards as in the Neopolitans. "They contain draped statues, coloured saints in actual monastic garb, with yellow skins suitable to æsthetics, and bleeding hands and wounded sides characteristic of the martyred. Alongside of these, appear Madonnas in royal robes, in festive dresses and in bright silks, crowned with diadems, wearing precious necklaces, brilliant ribbons and magnificent laces ; and with rosy complexions, glittering eyes and eyeballs formed of carbuncles. By this excess of literal imitation the artist gets no pleasure, but repugnance, often disgust and sometimes horror.¹ More than that, it tempts to crime, even in this fanatical country, and the jewelled hand of a Madonna was patiently kissed till her pearls had been dislodged from their fragile setting and borne away between the teeth of silently blasphemous lips, while the diamond tears of another were too carefully dried away !

In the Cathedral of Toledo, which rose to rival that of Burgos, and in which one of the most costly altars of the Renaissance glitters in extravagant gilding and ornament, there are beautiful dim recesses, and the Mauresque chapel makes this interior singularly in keeping with the spot. Here, perhaps, wandering at hazard through the lofty isles, a sacristan will lead the way to that dim chapel where, with lighted candle and fumbling key, he will open the old enclosure which shuts away the San Francisco of Alonso Cano. See how the light thrust in flickers through the darkness on to the miraculous figure of the Saint, pale as death, with livid lips of agony and divine longing, till once more the door is closed, and only the ever-haunting remembrance remains, even when again in the sunshine of the narrow streets.

¹ Taine.



A PALM GROVE IN MURCIA

CHAPTER II

Andalusia

"C'est une Afrique."—MAURICE BARRÈS.

MORE than any living writer has Barrès interpreted the psychology of Andalusia. As though penetrated with the atmosphere of Southern Spain, past and present, he writes from within rather than as a spectator. There is an opinion that sympathy shown with, for instance, the gipsy race, indicates something of gipsy blood within one's own veins, as was the case, it is insinuated, with Bunyan, or Borrow, or Sir Richard Burton. The same might almost be said of the Spanish race, which is one of the hardest in the world to understand, and it is therefore doubly interesting that this writer should have struck so justly not only the familiar Romanesque sentiment of the South, but the very vibrating chords of Andalusian consciousness as well. Ah! if one could for a while be a Spaniard in the streets of Seville, looking out—not on the world—but on just those streets—from under the shade of the sombrero, from over the folds of the mantle; if one could feel for even a moment the blood of the people which is as their language, and then, back in one's own skin, analyse all from within. But the contrasts of race come surging up, the slow pulses of our progressive civilisation throb coldly against the passionate conservatism of Spanish humanism. Here within touch of it, there beyond its sympathies, at moments stirred and at others frozen, the North and the South seem to meet only to turn away. Listen to the guitar and the rebec, see those floating shawls that pass, meet those eyes that seem to

say whether they would or not, "Well, what of it, are we not all Moors here still?" Meet the mysterious insolence of the dazzling gipsy eye, feel the hot sunshine and the beating shadows, the languor, the burning breath of day, the craving for the night. Listen, and see and feel, and yet know nothing—that is Andalusia.

What contrast can be found within so small a compass as that between Cordova and Seville? Cordova seems to have wrapped herself within a veil and to stand sorrowfully apart, far from the sensuous atmosphere of gardens, of the courts of love and of pleasure. For only what was vigorous in the life and death of Moorish days has come down to us here; its promise and ambition, its monuments, its honoured niche where stood the lamp in which the flame of learning was kept burning till Western nations, wondering at such magnificent light, bore it away to illumine their own path. Black as the shadows in a canvas by Ribera are those cast by that great past, and only strong light could have cast them. All here is strong shadow and echo—echo which seems to repeat with resignation the words of Renan upon the profundity of Arab science and learning and art—"La langue, rien que la langue . . ."

But the vast central vistas of columns in the great mosque are still instinct with far more force and virility than can be found in the graceful chambers of the Alcazar at Seville, or in the voluptuous courts of Granada. Even the massive fountain in the cathedral orangery has a certain sternness of its own, surrounded by brawny drawers of water, and echoing to their strident laughter. Such is Cordova, vital sepulchre for the life of to-day, and as though to emphasise still further the atmosphere of detachment between the past and the present, the contrast between life and death, we see in the small cemetery of the order of San Bruno an open grave, which always remains waiting for its burden. No sooner filled than the earth is turned

from another, and the monks view it daily with reflective melancholy, with that powerful fascination which Spaniards feel for the skeleton of life as well as for life itself.

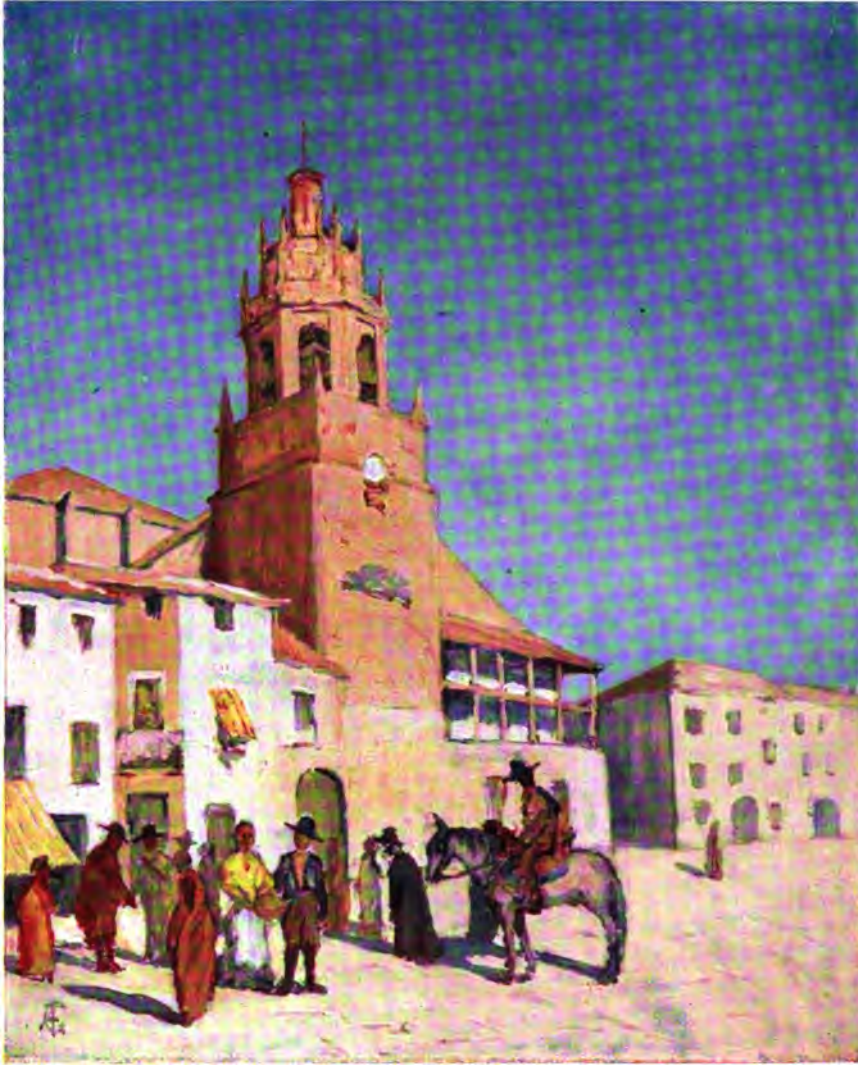
It is no doubt a trite remark that the impression of inertia which Andalusia reflects is no faithful mirror of Spain's progressive energy to-day. Andalusia is not Spain—never has been—though for one century her great artistic cradle. For some obscure reason the inspiration of art is profoundly susceptible of certain influences of nature over others, and will again and again bring forth seed in one spot, while other areas, no less beautiful, perhaps, remain barren of just that wording of the soul's speech. Overlapping the after morn of the Moorish expulsion, as though to assert new life on the very spot where so many foreign arts had bloomed, the extraordinary artistic buoyancy of Spain began when Murillo, Velasquez, Herrera, his unsympathetic master in Seville; Ribera in Valencia; Cano in Granada, rose within a common firmament. Until the eighteenth century Andalusia was, in spite of her Oriental languor after the largest intellectual and physical massacre the world had ever seen, fuller of artistic vitality than Northern Spain where the great thinkers, the dramatists, theologians and historians all flourished; and the South kept for itself the sunlit birthplaces of the old masters which have now become with time as their tombs, monumental for all ages and casting shadows in which men pause eagerly to breathe in the old inspiration of a great age. But no young force, like love amongst the ruins, dreams in the midst of Andalusia's heavy sleep.

No, Andalusia is not Spain, for the strong life of the Spanish people has never belonged to it, and even the part they played in the gardens of the South during the most important period of their history remains totally obscure. If in Roman days Cordova was the birthplace of Lucan and the two Senecas, and not far off, in wild rugged Bilbilis, the bitterly sarcastic, life-loving Martial

first saw the light ; if Avicenna, Averroes and countless poets and students looked upon the scenery of the spot as their own ; if both ages, Roman and Moorish—the satirists of Roman days and the philosophers and enthusiastic translators of the Moorish Khalifates—were proud to drink their inspiration from a common well, the intellectual life of united Spain has never consented to flourish in their shadows. Cervantes, Calderon and De la Vega, with their “cataract pens,” Quevado, Spain’s greatest satirist whom, alas ! the gods loved not, all were of the North ; and to-day Echegarez, with his versatile and many talents, hails from Madrid, while from Catalonia, where life is as sturdy and go-ahead as anywhere else in the world, came the poets of the troubadour age, come the artists of to-day : Rusinol, poet and painter of deserted gardens ; Zuloago, with his bold handling of human passions ; Valera, with his fine analytical pen.

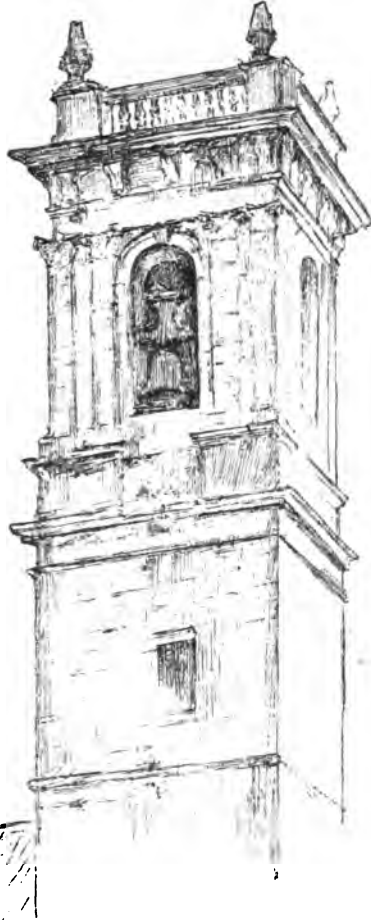
No sooner had Moorish energy faded in the South, however, than the artistic genius of the Spanish people underwent a change, and gradually deserted the gardens of Andalusia. It drifted completely away from its first cradle and sought the shadow of the far more intellectual North. Goya, the bold link between the old and new schools—child of genius and caprice—belongs not to the delicious sunshine of Seville or Valencia ; and Fortuny, he, too, was born elsewhere among the strong and laborious people of Tarragona. With these two great names Spanish art changed its river course, perhaps for ever, and like a spark of fire illumined the appalling *tristesse* of Academic Madrid.

So, Andalusia, in a modern sense you bloom apart from Spain though in its midst—bloom apart by right of exotic not intellectual interpretation of life, while Cordova, Seville and Granada are now no more than an extinguished halo, the abstract symbols of your story. Not yet does your prose show what you are, only your poetry tells what you have been. Valencia smiles at us with living gaiety, but Valencia is Jewish rather than Spanish. Seville



RONDA.—A SCENE IN THE PIAZZA.

sparkles with gaudy hues, with beautiful women, for "Certes, l'Espagne est grande et les femmes d'Espagne sont belles,"¹ but Seville is Flamenco, not purely Spanish. Cadiz belongs to the sea no less than does Venice; she detaches herself from the peninsula like a pearl that the waves refuse to give up. Ronda, where the king is seeking to revive the old spirit of *noblesse* with forgotten orders of chivalry, seems to stand out from the midst of Andalusia as a breath from the Pyrenees, too keen and vital in its atmosphere not to separate itself from the languor of the plains around and the enervating loveliness of Algenciras, where we pursue the phantom



TOWER OF S. MARTIN, VALENCIA.

of Andalusia to the brink of the sea that divides it so narrowly from its mother earth of Africa. And that African spirit of Spain, where can it best be studied? Surely in the little

¹ A. de Musset.

town of Almeria, as spotlessly white and Oriental as Tangiers or Kairowan. Whether life really moves here or not I know not, but the very sunbeams of this happy spot seem stationary. See how they send their shafts through the closely-planted trees of the principal avenue, where the minute social life of the town passes to and fro a hundred times in the afternoon, like the hands of a clock that counts not the hours. And Murcia, with its palm groves, its old legendic stigma of history in its Puerta de la Mala Muger? Ah, Murcia, it would be difficult to receive a more profound impression of natural fertility and human negligence, of Andalusian bloom and Andalusian inertia, than about this exquisite corner of Spain where the oranges lie shrivelling on the ground beneath the mingling shadows of their leaves and of magnificent palms, waiting with its infinite hidden wealth, its certain double crops a year which no year ever sees, for the ocean-spent rivers to spread, not like one but many Niles, athwart the land. That Andalusia will be again irrigated as in the time of the Moors, few now doubt. But the gift of water will come not only from the North, but from the influences which fortunately for Spain combine foreign energy as well as Spanish pride. Now that Carlism lies dead, there seems every chance of Spain becoming as centralised in Madrid as France is in Paris, or as Italy is *not* in Rome. Centralisation is not so bad as some think if it be allowed to develop round a throne upon which an able though youthful king is seated.

But the undercurrent of progress which is undoubtedly manifesting itself all over Spain is hard to keep in view in Andalusia. The people are *not* naturally progressive; and schools and colleges and railways are no more indicative of internal energy than, let us say, in China. There is one feature, indeed, in common between Andalusia and the whole of Spain, and that is the lack of intellectual life of any kind among the Spanish women. Charm, beauty which is perfectly natural, for they rarely borrow any assistance from art, the most graceful manner, the most



ON THE HIGH ROAD, RONDA.

delightful interpretation of home life ; these all exist, but little else. No outside interests, no ambition, an absolute indifference to art, literature, or even music in its higher sense. What other country in Europe can say with equal truth : "No women play any part in our story ; their names are not found among the names of those we honour with laurel wreaths or commemorate in any way among our artists, patriots, poets, musicians, novelists." Side by side with Spain and in the same hour Italy, too, lay prostrate, but the vigour of returning life penetrated the minds and souls of her men and women alike. Her women had no Eastern veil to throw off, but in Spain the dearth of female energy and scope has done much to hold back Spanish progress and to perpetuate an Oriental one-sidedness in her sociology which Western nations no longer recognise. Whether this be one among many reasons or not, the civilisation of the South of Spain, at least, seems on a low plane without any especial ideals, such as some believe stir the Spaniards of the North.

Deny it who will, Flamenco Spain signifies more than merely all that is picturesque, untutored, gaudy, impertinent and indifferent. Wherever the Flamenco shadow is cast, there progress in some form or other stands still, and whatever parallels are drawn between African soil and race with those of Andalusia, they are heightened by the existence of these nomads who offer the same barrier to progress as do the wandering Bedouins of the desert. Every effort made to expulse the gipsies from the country has failed. "Encouraged by the expulsion of the Moors in 1609-11, Dr Sancho de Moncada, a professor in the University of Toledo, addressed Philip III. in a discourse, published in 1619, urging that monarch to drive out the Gipsies, but he failed." They seem destined to hold their own by all the most frivolous of arts, and to dance away stern decrees no less now than in the time of Charles V., when gipsy dances formed part of the marriage festivities at Toledo. "Yet the Gipsies have had their

great men, whilst their pure blood has leavened much dull clay and given fresh life to many an effete noble vein . . . while some of the most learned and famed of the priesthood in Spain have been, according to a Gipsy, of the Gipsies or at least of Gipsy blood.”¹ Nevertheless, no matter where it lingers, the Flamenco element lowers the moral and progressive standard of a



IN THE MARKET-PLACE, MURCIA.

country, and in Seville that element is very distinctly felt. “They are,” says Bourgoing, “the shepherds of the Spanish stage, less insipid but also less innocent than ours. Their knavish tricks, their plots, their amorous intrigues of a piece with their morals, are the subjects of several *saynetes* and *tonadillas*, and in this school more than one of the spectators is formed.” The gipsy’s view of life, his passion for display, for dance and song, for boastful and idle existence—these have become Spanish as well as Flamenco traits in the South. Whether the descendants of the great tribe of Jatts from the banks of the Indus first imparted these features to the Andalusians or not, whether those bands that first migrated

¹ Sir Richard Burton.

through Egypt and Morocco or across the Pyrenees into Spain, brought with them this hypnotic extravagance, none can now precise, but, to its detriment, parts of Andalusia seem to owe all the qualities that attract the outsider, artist, poet, or idler, to this unaspiring people.

In what mysterious link between man and his environments are we to trace the undeniable influence which some cities seem to exert upon the dweller within their gates? Is it some law of nature imperfectly understood as yet by science, which a French writer of the day has discussed under the title of "L'hypnotisme de la Foule"? Is it a force impalpable, psychical of the mass that dominates the individual, opposing, moving and guiding with subtle, ever-constant force the native freedom of personality, forging, as it were, invisible chains that bind the mind of the citizen as well as his body to the avenues and mansions that overshadow his daily life. For within the walls of many an ancient town there are narrow streets and open piazzas for the soul also, and the shadows of mediæval churches and palaces are lurking places for strange spirits of the mind and the will, as well as for the bodily members when wearied with the noonday heat. Or is it the ever-pervading panoply of art, the perfection of expression of will, faith, ideals and æsthetic craving, that has crystallised the outward decking of an old town with such acute force of bygone energies that the receptive spirit falls unconsciously under its spell, and becomes to a certain extent within its walls the thrall of a past that is ever present, a past which tempers or impels the dynamic forces of modern life, and resolves the active free initiation of the individual into the dreamy exterior of past ideals realised, and imperious in their bond over all who may meet their message. Athéne Promachos dominating the roofs of Athens, is the eternal symbol of the city of centuries. Cathedral spire and vaulted aisle are her shield and helmet, and the tortuous streets and by-ways are winding as the serpent at her side.

But who shall fathom the soul of the ancient city and compel this daughter of the gods to give up the secret of her unfathomable intellectual charm? That an old town has such a character, distinct, individual, personal, there can be no doubt to any mind endowed with sensibility of perception. That this charm can take possession of the faculties, can absorb and delight or sadden, can mould the character of youth or trouble the spirit of maturity, of this there also can be little doubt. A gifted writer of the day,¹ speaking of Bruges, has said,—

“ Cette Bruges apparait presque humaine . . . un ascendant s'établit d'elle sur ceux qui y séjournent. *Elle les façonne selon ses sites et ses cloches.*”

Such is the mighty force of the town of the past in which the visible monuments have worked a mystic bond with the inhabitants, so that all who dwell there must partake of the strange impalpable spirit of the place. How profoundly true this is of Seville, anyone who has lived for a time in the town will be ready to admit, but what a glittering many-sided character to analyse is this one, if we endow it with its proper personality, if we seek to unravel the glittering threads that make up its twisted medley of impressions.

The labyrinth in the garden of the Alcazar is not more bewildering. In the shadow of the lofty minaret bell tower, one is dominated by the supreme power of the East meeting the West—the deep shades of the sombre Gothic interior are all a lower note of harmony—grim, stern and ghostly, but only a stone's throw from the banks of the glittering Guadalquivir, whose sands seem to tell of the tawny sands of the desert, and whose waves dance in the smiling open space that surrounds the golden tower. A poet of our time has said that the West and the East shall never meet. Such, however, is Seville—a contradiction in terms, a chapter of impossible contrasts—like the cutting icy winter wind

¹ Georges Rodenbach.

which sweeps down the Alcazar's garden-walks flowered on every side with blossoms—and glittering with the glint of baked Moorish tiles. As some colder flower of Western womanhood, garbed in the gorgeous attire of the East and bedizened with strange jewels of Arabia, perfumed with attar of roses and crushed scents from desert lands, Seville stands out, bizarre, enigmatic, elusive, but ever alluring, vibrating with a language of colour as passionate as the sharp ringing of bells in her towering belfry—ecstatic as the sumptuous processional of gorgeous canopies that surge through streets laden with incense in Holy Week. Can Europe, can the East alone show another such wonder as this strange meeting of the tides, where the lofty palm trees and the marbled court yield in nothing to the glories of Islam on African or on Asiatic soil, and where the dim-lit aisles of cathedral vista are stern and rugged as the cloudland of northern mountain fastnesses? But the inmates of this exotic garden seem rather charmed in stupor than vivified by the sharp octaves of their surroundings. A devotional hypnotism shows itself in the listless crowd surrounding some shop windows, where are exposed to the public gaze tawdry images of the Virgin or the Saints tinselled with amazing frippery and of a lack of sentiment that is almost artistic in its very crying emptiness and shallowness. The very puppets, seem these citizens, of a great religious spectacle, as though the life which lingers in the letters of the past had sucked out all possibility of a present for them, and had left them only the dimmest wraith of a consciousness of future existence.

Andalusia is as the Moorish archives of Spain. When Ximénez, Archbishop of Toledo and author of a history of the Gothic kings, burnt at Grenada all the Arab MSS. he could lay hands on—upwards of 80,000—he believed that he had obliterated for ever from the book of history the memory of the enemies of his faith, and cleared the way for all the histories of the Spanish people which might follow the work of Alfonso the

Learned. But the Moors had left a crown of laurel which refused to wither. All the vegetation of Andalusia, the sugar cane, mulberries, rice-fields, banana and cotton trees, the palms and citrons, all still speak with the yearly season that changes the desert into a garden and the brown "camel's back" into a parterre. Only, perhaps, can the olive count this red soil as much its own before the advent of the Moors as in Italy or Greece; the olive, which never needs transplanting, but chooses



OLD FORTIFICATIONS, ALMERIA.

as its rightful heritage all the most poetic regions of the earth, from the western isle of Japan through the Celestial Empire to the flowering sides of the Arno and the slopes of the Pyrenees. So in Spain, the olive follows not only the most fertile but the most romantic and smiling parts of Spanish landscape; its sacred oil burnt before certain images becomes miraculous, and it links itself into one of the most unique of Andalusian features—the curious dying-out life of the oil-mills.

They are gradually disappearing before machinery, these old oil vintages which for centuries of Decembers and Januaries have typified the rustic Spanish character as it developed, not from the Moors in this instance, but from something more classic, perhaps, in its primitive, agricultural spirit mingled with the yearly

harvest festivals as were the vintages of the ancients, alive with the songs to Bacchus. Sitting over the fire in the mill-kitchen, on rugged wooden benches, the workmen in the days of vintage collect to tell their stories, and even to act them, before admiring audiences of the men and their wives. Garbed in impromptu costumes, with roughly-painted faces, they make capital actors, with the strong lights and shadows of the oil-lamps playing about them grotesquely. The burning olive wood, the flame of the virgin's lamp that consumes the first oil crushed from the mill, are said to combine their lights in strange fashion, filling the corners of the great kitchens with wide patches of shadow. Rembrandt must have seen these lights combined, for many of his groups reveal this mysterious illumination, vivid in more than one point, and in more than a hundred insufficient.¹ The brown faces, black and brilliant eyes, blue shirts and bright melon-coloured handkerchiefs stand out in the determined focus, or are lost in the strange shadows. And against this background these men, as wild as are the shepherds of the Roman Campagna, celebrate their feast of the mills, a feast which is neither Flamenco nor purely Andalusian, nor in any way Moorish. Rather does it echo the Dionysian of the Greeks, and after a day of ceaseless labour, men and women will dance and sing till long past midnight, a dance at once more candid and more natural than the better known dances of Spain, since in these lonely mills men and women meet together wholly for healthy pleasure.

The first impression of Seville is as of a garden of oranges, a sparse orange grove. The piazzas, courts, Alcazar gardens, all are honey-coloured with the fruit which the Spanish proverb asserts is "Gold in the morning, silver at noon, and lead at night." "Civil as an orange, and something of that jealous complexion," wrote Shakespeare in a playful wording of Seville's pretty name.

¹ Mas y Prat.

The town is far more living than Granada, that mediæval centre of proud savagery. The atmosphere is so clear and the sun so powerful that the very artists bake their pictures in the sunshine and declare that in the process the colours acquire a peculiar warmth. There is but one dark recess in Seville where the sun penetrates with difficulty, and that is in the vast and gloomy cathedral which in spite of its lamps—as many as the days of the year—is like all the cathedrals of Spain, only a dark splendid tomb, containing smaller tombs, dwarfed by their gigantic sepulchre. That of Christopher Columbus, borne by four kings of Castile, Aragon, Léon, and Navarre, is worthy of more than a moment's attention. But gloomy as it all seems, and barren of the richer side of Gothic imagination, yet it serves admirably as contrast to the airy minaret, the happy court of oranges and sunflickers, the delicious fountains over which the women bend, with the red carnations in their hair reflected like drops of blood in the clear water.

The streets of Seville are among the most characteristic in the world, as they are also the most idle and flippant in atmosphere, the most genuinely Bohemian. For where else is the Gipsy element so noticeable? What strange unforgettable types turn and greet one with lingering stare as we pass. This is the heart of Flamenco Spain where, after many a period of persecution the Gipsy tribe has ingratiated itself into the life of a people over-accustomed to foreign elements in their midst. Without an art of any kind; without literature, architecture, without even—here—a genuine expression of music or poetry, they have coloured the whole place with their individuality. The very songs, the *Cantos Flamencos* of Demofice, in phonetic Andalusian, which, full of weak poesy, languid morals, and passionate sentiment, are chanted at fairs and markets, in the streets and *cafés* of Seville, are probably not genuine gipsy inspirations. Their gifts are as illusory as they themselves



SPANISH GIPSY DANCING THE TANGA.

are intangible, and I quote the song by Béranger, because whoever has read them will remember the words with visions of the streets of Seville and the glassy eyes that never reflect the sunshine, filming over as with a dull tear, when weary.

“Sorciers, beteleurs, ou filous,
 Reste immonde
 D'un ancien monde ;
 Sorciers, bateleurs, ou filous,
 Gais bohémiens, d'oùvenez vous ?

D'où nous venons, l'on n'en sait rien.
 L'hirondelle,
 D'où nous vient—elle ?
 D'où nous venons, l'on sait rien.
 D'où nous irons, le sait-on bien ?

Sans pays, sans prince, et sans lois,
 Notre vie
 Doit faire envie ;
 Sans pays, sans prince et sans lois
 L'homme est heureux un jour sur trois.”

Whether attracted or repulsed, amused or disgusted, we see them on every side, and with difficulty can one imagine Seville without this strange feature of her population. But that half its fantastic colour would vanish with them there can be no doubt, and not all the sunshine of Andalusia could replace it.

In spite of their surface gaiety, the Sevillians have the one characteristic which unites all Spaniards—their lack of light humour and a certain forbidding gloom which takes one by surprise in this laughing spot. An Englishman who had lived for years in Seville, and knew the language perfectly, went one day into a pharmacy for some medicine. While it was being prepared the chemist entered into conversation with him, and

apropos of something began abusing the English very freely. "No doubt you agree with me, señor," he added. "Frenchmen think much the same about the English as I do." "No doubt I should too," answered his customer, laughing good-humouredly, "were I not English myself." The man was overcome. He said nothing, but when he handed the medicine to his customer refused to take anything for it. I believe such an instance of unhumorous pride could hardly have shown itself in any other country. Spain must be judged as a two-face medal continually, so strong are the contrasts on every side, in the people's character as well as in the physiognomy of their land.

Turn, for instance—those who seek for this power of contrast—out of the sunshine of the streets into the chapel of the Hospital de la Caridad where, in almost impenetrable darkness, hangs the terrible painting of two corpses by Valdes Leal, with its brief inscription: "Finis Gloriæ Mundi"; a painting which seems to sum up all the passion for sharp sensation and violent contrast in this people.

The original of Byron's Don Juan was born, as all know, in Seville. His parents were Corsicans, noble on one side at least—noble, proud, ferocious and bloodthirsty, all fine qualities for that age. Their exiled offspring continued the traditions of his race, and found in his own personal beauty, his powers of fascination, his thirst for the blood of hearts, all the weapons for a life of gallant adventure. Then came a sinister vision, and as violent penitent as he had been reckless sinner, he sought admission into the holy order of the Caridad, whose divine mission was to prepare condemned criminals for their end.

It all seems banal enough—a stormy youth, a sudden repentance—and Spain's story is full of such incidents; indeed the message of the monastery to the seventeenth century rarely passed unheard, and sooner or later all sorts and conditions of men—men

of genius no less than men with weary souls—were tempted to end their lives between convent walls. But how different are the penances men seek out for the sickness or sinfulness of their own consciousness! Where one will turn to the message of Heaven, another will seek out the tortures of Hell as his cure. In spite of the apparent desire for the peace of Heaven which Miguel Manara, Don Juan's flesh-and-blood ghost, seemed to express with his changed existence, here, under the influence of Leal's appalling picture, other solutions of his inner mind seem to enter ours. Don Juan sought neither the promise of Heaven nor the warning of Hell to cure himself of his ills ; but with an indescribable horror of himself and the incorruptible soul of man, sickened by memory of sorrow and suffering that does *not* die, he sought a last and horrible joy in preserving before his eyes only what was corruptible. In such a man, to whom exaggeration was as the very essence of life, only a refinement of abnormal sentiment was possible, and this frenzied sensualist found his ease at last in contemplating only what could *not* outlive the soul, the body that haunted him with its vice till he loathed it and gloated over its ultimate fate. So was Valdes Leal commissioned to open the charnel-house and seek his model.

Ah, how all the characters of Spanish story, whether of purely Spanish blood or no, stand out in relief by right of some astounding characteristic, some violent contrast of mental physiognomy caught, it would seem, in the very atmosphere of the land. Not one seems normal, whether painter, writer, soldier or lover ; each seems to have been a prey to the volcanic forces that seized upon the mentality of Spain, as elsewhere upon the earth's surfaces. Hardly one of its great men can go down to posterity under one name—painter, or poet, or whatever it be. One is a poet, but a soldier, a fanatic, a monk, as well. Another is a national hero, a King Arthur, but the embodiment of cruelty and treachery also. Another is a disciple of profane love, but far more than that ; this

typical sensualist for all ages, a pendant to Cassanova and Benvenuto Cellini, dared to teach as a master the lessons of the soul, and to seek his niche among the canonised saints of the Christian world. And here, among nuns, in the very centre of the Madonna's cult, Don Juan's death mask is seen, and curiously we look upon it, as we do upon all the strange contrasts of light and gloom in this land, the antagonism between nature and man, and the yet strong savour which hold all together.

CHAPTER III

Granada.

“ Dans ces palais de fées,
Mon cœur, plein de concerts,
Croît, aux voix étouffées
Qui viennent des déserts,
Entendre les génies
Mêler les harmonies
Des chansons infinies
Qu'ils chantent dans les airs ! ”

VICTOR HUGO.

CONTRAST, sharp and bitter, is the underlying feature of Spain ; and here in Granada it reaches a kind of climax. What a virile and magnificent setting for a decadent people ! What a contrast between this lofty pinnacle where the torch of Moorish progress was extinguished, where the “strong and ruddy heart of glorious Morisma ” ceased to beat—and the race who yearly celebrate that event and their own subsequent decay with the winter snows ! Here where Moor and Spaniard were more closely allied by ties of blood than in any other part of Andalusia, where the vast population of fifteenth-century Granada is said to have barely included five hundred Moors of pure extraction, and where to-day the similarity of type between both races is strongly marked, the racial antipathy has developed to an extraordinary degree since the conquest of the city. We still see the people's crass pride in having descended from the crusaders of their Faith, the caballero spirit which greets one from the gutter upwards, as strong in the South as its origin was in the North. We still trace close ties between the religious fanaticism from which their

popular aristocracy developed and the old spirit of Islam. Still, after five centuries of fallen freedom, the gloomy inhabitants of Granada rouse themselves once a year from their national *tristesse* to an acute access of joy, other in spirit to their violent enjoyment of the bull-fight, that "banalité de l'Espagne." The streets where sound of song or stringed instrument is now almost unknown, awake to the echo of guitars, timbrels, and rustic drum, which, in spite of all police laws, penetrate into the very churches at the midnight mass—churches ablaze with the mystic lights which Spaniards far back into Visigothic days showed such passion for on their altars and before their images, and which the popular street songs still record :

" A las puertas de Granada,
Calle de los Herradores
Està la Virgin del Triumfo
Con venticinco faroles."

After a year's sullen silence this extraordinary enthusiasm puts all authority to the winds, and by the time the crowds have collected to witness the "Fall of Granada," a drama attributed in its original form to Philip IV. himself, the excitement has well-nigh passed bounds. To witness Moor vanquished by Christian caballero, to see the latter treacherously beset by a dozen powerful Moors and conquer them one by one, is exquisite joy. The race they destroy in effigy has long ceased to give a thought to the fair country from which it was expelled, but the Spaniards still insist upon a kind of memorial antipathy which savours of the old Arab feuds and of the same blood origin. This yearly fête of independence at Granada is as the mass offered up to the people's social conceit veiled under an exuberance of religious and patriotic pride. There is in its wild hilarity a fanaticism which offers a defiance to progress, for in Spain the serious and the ridiculous are often as close comrades as were Don Quixote

and his man Sancho. It is, as we have said, the land of contrasts.

The modern town of Granada is just "modern," nothing else. The life of the cafés, the beggars, the maimed, the wretched crowds about the Cartuja, the new streets that hide the inconceivable squalor of the old, the bookshops with their dusty books, the short-necked women swathed in shawls and with dark and fiery eyes, the warm-bloodedness of life, and the dearth of existence, fill the new town with a sort of modern decay such as only our own age knows anything about. The microbe of a race's decay which used to hide behind the crannies and nooks of time-eaten walls, until some strong foreign hand had swept it away, is now given, in stagnated countries, a new lease of life with a new kind of whitewash. Let us hope it is not infectious.

The ascent to the Alhambra, up the Calle de la Gomares, makes the first picturesque approach to the citadel. Lined with little shops of "antiquities" to attract the visitor who, American or English, finds a curious pleasure in being "done" when it is not by his own countrymen, we see windows full of strange odds and ends, black with soot rather than with time: old keys, ornaments, piled in artistic confusion, the ruffraff of a country from which all portable treasures have long flown. Here, too, are coloured stucco models of the Alhambra, reflecting one of the most hopelessly bad tastes that tourist life has developed. But all this pell-mell *vie de boutique* is soon left behind, and passing under the great portal we reach the shade of magnificent trees which have for a century's long summers sung the praise of the foreign hand that planted them. The ascent is but a short one, and sweet fresh air, songs of birds, enveloping verdure through which trickles the music of many streams, give this climb to the Alhambra a wonderful charm. Then comes the first sight of the great monumental ruin of Carlo Quinto's ambition, only interesting now as marking in all probability the original site of

the old mosque, and bringing with it reminder of the words Victor Hugo has put into the proud sovereign's mouth :

“ Si haut que soit le but où votre orgueil aspire
Voilà le dernier terme ! ”

Whether before or after seeing the palace itself, everyone who comes to Granada has, I imagine, leant for a few moments over the parapet of the old Torre de la Vela for the great coup d'œil. Far beneath it lies the vast Vega, which is as a field of history—a field on which mediæval chivalry left some of its best traditions of legendic valour and romance ; for was not Spain the “land of chosen warriors” ? There, tinged with those new and chivalric ideals breathed by the King Arthur of Spain into Spanish tradition and its romantic poetry alike, the Moors exalted their old existence, the life of the desert, which is the life of the warrior ; and there was enacted their citadel's last scene, as famous in romantic episode as the fall of Troy. The great panorama of the past lies around, a magic circle of stage on which kings, not only generals, passed, and where deeds, not numbers, made war great. He who climbs here on some wintry day when the lovely hills of snow make earth-bound clouds and when the sun is flecking the fields to red, may well think he sees still the gleam of crimson raiment which Moor and Christian alike wore in battle ; the waving of the crimson flags with their gold and azure fringes, their loops and poles of gold, their inscriptions to a victorious God ; may think he sees, too, the last of the Sons of Scarlet throw himself into the combat, mounted upon a mottled white steed, that old-time biblical emblem of good fortune, riding *à la genette*, as was his custom, and pursued by his unlucky star. Four centuries ago ; but history stands still for who would read. And it was but within our time that a desecrated tombstone, which disdainful followers of Islam had long trodden



THE COURT OF THE LIONS, THE ALHAMBRA.

down beneath their feet, gave back to the light of Tlemcen a melancholy reminder of Granada's last milestone.

In the great plain of Granada the Moors, whose love of single combat had sprung naturally from the customs of the land of Cid, broke lance against glittering lance and fought their aristocratic duels on superbly caparisoned steeds. Single combat among the Arabs of Arabia, or the Moors and Berbers of Africa, had been all unknown, as it is among those races to-day ; but the Moors showed themselves masters of it, and the fashion in mediæval Spain kept up the standard of chivalry, as the vendetta of other lands still keeps it down. The aristocracy of the sword was as sacred as that of the descendants of the early Cherifs, and mounted duelling had another characteristic other than the noblesse of valour. It increased pride in the steed, which, like its rider, could feel the prick of the combat. We can no more separate the Moor of history from his horse than we can the Arab of to-day from his. Inseparable in battle, created for man by God from the wind as Adam had been from a handful of clay, the Arab horse had carried the banner of Islam along African shores, as surely as the eagle had spread the pinions of Rome. With far-seeing insight, the Prophet has preached in its favour, and inculcated its respect.

“Horses for the combat,
Cattle for poverty,
Camels for the desert,”

says the Arab now as he did yesterday.

The world to-day is satiated with descriptions of the Alhambra ; but if satiety shadows most beautiful works of art of our time, ignorance and indifference shadowed them still more in the near past. The very fact that no profound chords are struck and echoed through this enchanted alcazar, makes it more than ever the possession of whoever can enjoy, and who still cares to

dream. It is one of those happy spots in the world where nature and man seem to have worked together towards a supreme result. The delicate configuration of the hills, the smiling loneliness of the plains, the wealth of woodland that clothes them, all speak in unison with the fane environed. Scarcely conscious is one of the transition from nature to art, so exquisitely does the human achievement crystallise the dream vaguely enfolded in the land that lies about, and something at least of vague idealism finds a goal in this work of art, into which the essence of flower-laden slopes has passed at the touch of a vanished wand. So wandering through the enchanted palace of Granada, gazing each moment through exquisitely modelled windows at the glories of sunlit hills and plain beneath, it is difficult to decide from what source enjoyment is fed most deeply, from infinite nature or from art. As when sitting in a Moorish garden a sense of poetic perfection is borne from all sides with the ever-falling musical ripple of the water, the faint perfume of the myrtles, the dainty ramification of the "architectura verde," so, wandering through the vistas of the Alhambra, it is impossible to distinguish where art begins and nature ends in the exquisite borderland of each. Impressions alike from within and from without are felt, and to the most critical mind it would be labour lost to attempt to resolve this double star, or to appraise the value of the gem, as distinct from the setting.

The crowning charms of the Alhambra might be summed up in the words, strangeness and mystery. But let it not be supposed that the strangeness woven for us into this fantastic structure is in any way due to our unfamiliarity with the sentiments of an alien race, nor that the Lions supporting the Fountain of the Court were to the Moor of that period emblems, or realistic images of the monarchs of his own desert home. Even as the Venetians erected upon a column for the gaze of all men a creature whose fantastic wildness breathes with the



GATEWAY IN THE GENERALIFE GARDENS, GRANADA.

eager and virile life of the young city of the Lagoons, so the Moors in this incomparable piece of sculpture have wafted the dim sense of their own monotonous repose, the sculpturesque calm of the desert, a chord that still echoes in the Arab's music of to-day the fatalism of the East petrified in lovely monotonous harmonies.

There is a window in the Alhambra—all know it—through which that only real “Château d’Espagne” in this châteauless land rises through the thick darkness of cypresses, far above the valley’s slopes, framed like living tapestry, between the Mauresque pillars. It was the garden of love, of which Palacio has written :

“un temple ayer de amores y
de gloria,
Y hoy, pagina infeliz de
nuestra historia ”¹



A WINDOW IN THE ALHAMBRA, GRANADA.

—a garden that rivals in loveliness the fairest vista of the Alhambra.

Never did the Moors show better than in their pleasure grounds. “It is delightful to see their gardens when one has not the weeding and irrigation of them. What fruit! what foliage! what trellises! what alcoves! what a contest of rose and jessamine for supremacy in odour! of lute and nightingale for victory in song! and how the little bright ripples of the docile brooks, the fresher for their races, leap up against one another,

¹ “A temple yesterday of glory and of love,
To-day, a darkened page within our history.”

to look on.”¹ A very home was this of Oriental romance, a summer prison for the Moorish princesses of Granada to wander through, hiding amidst the fountains and flowers, themselves like exotic blossoms, with complexions “the colour of an orange flower on which an overladen bee had left a slight infusion of her purest honey.” And speaking now of these Moorish women, for whom all the splendour of secular Mohamedan architecture was built up, in lingering about the Court of the Lions on which the harem apartments gave, the story of their intellectual freedom reads strangely like a legend, and, in spite of their delicate charm, these interior courts have the seal of prison on them as well as of palace.

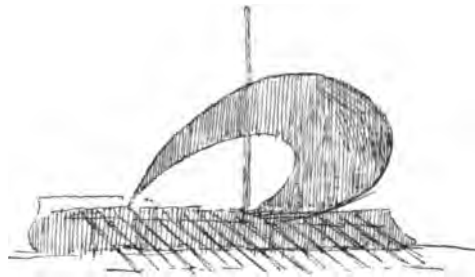
Here, if slave could rise to queen, it was the change from one prison to another, where the bars were more brightly gilded and the fair prisoner wore more numerous and exquisitely-wrought chains. It was a strange transplanting, this Oriental harem life into a European land; but the fair shell where it lay hidden keeps nothing now but the murmur of flowering springs and summer breezes.

“ Ne songe plus qu’aux frais platanes,
 Au bain mêlé d’ambre et de nard,
 Au golfe où glissent les tartanes . . .
 Il faut au sultan des sultanes ;
 Il faut des perles au poignard ! ”

There is another “tapestry” view enhanced by delicate Mauresque openings in the tiny Trocador, itself decorated with charming paintings of various towns and ports of Tunis, which tell the date of the restoration of the little chamber—probably shortly after Carlo Quinto’s grand expedition. He was therefore enabled to refind here, in this fair and laughing setting, the memory of his African victories.

¹ Landor.

Surely no other building of the past expresses such gorgeousness as the Alhambra. It rouses the imagination with eager effort to picture the life and luxe of its wonderful day. But these dwelling courts have left no homes for Moorish phantoms. Men and women alike were too resplendent with the colour of garment and the brilliancy of gems to have left pale ghosts behind them. Their passion for life and splendour, for glowing colours, for exotic song, had something of bodily fire that refuses to be conjured up with any ghostly moonlight. They belong to the sun heat of the past, not to the shades of to-day; to the keenest imagination more than to any historic remembrance. The Alhambra is alive with their vitality, but would laugh their ghosts to scorn.



DESIGN FROM PAINTING OF CHARLES V.'S FLOTILLA
ON THE WALLS OF THE TROCADOR, ALHAMBRA.

Brilliant as is the dress worn by the rich Moors of Morocco to-day, it can give us but a faint idea of the splendour in which the Nasrite sovereigns indulged. Sultan and Sultana alike delighted in the wearing of priceless wealth, and the jeweller's art in Africa, which—not natural to the primitive Arab—had ever been largely in the hands of Jews, Berbers and mixed tribes, grew to be with the Moors of Spain an effete passion. The Berber and Jewish influences were strong, but far stronger was the influence of the East. "Le bijou, c'est l'Orient," and it was the East filtering through every channel of art which transformed Spain and the taste of its conquerors. In Spain itself, where the rude Visigothic age had obliterated many of the gentler arts of Rome, the mass of gold and silver work, the pearls and gems of Toledo, which had fallen into the hands of the wonder-struck nomad warriors, hardly reflected a general

delight in ornament other than religious. But with the Moors personal adornment was a passion. Did not one Sultan lose his life through the precious stones he wore? Abou-Said, "le Vermeil," garbed in the crimson robes of his dynasty, (so runs the story,) was the guest of the King of Aragon, Peter the Cruel, whose envy was aroused by the sight of the Moor's priceless jewels. As the simplest way of possessing himself of the coveted gems, he murdered his guest in the fields of Tablada, and one of the rubies worn by this ill-fated king was given by a Spanish sovereign to an English prince, and may be seen to-day in the crown of the Queen of England in the Tower of London.¹

When in 1492-1502 the Andalusian Moors took refuge on the African coast, they took with them such riches as had never yet been seen in the country. The garments of the women, their jewellery and golden embroideries, says Paysonnel, surpassed in quantity all the woollen stuffs in the tents of the richest Arabs. Whether this is true or not, most of those rare jewels have long disappeared; but if the story was known of all the extravagant ornaments worn by Isabel and the Catholic sovereigns, or of the mass of pearls and fantastic wealth which, according to Madame d'Aulnoy, covered the half-starved ladies of the Court of the seventeenth century, we should find that most of them were Moorish spoils rather than Spanish in origin. In the heart of Morocco, where so much of the art and taste of Granada penetrated into the imitated palaces of Boabdil's mourned kingdom, perhaps many of those historic possessions long lay hidden. Who knows how much of the riches of those unfortunate exiles may not still lie buried in the desert soil of North Africa, since the Arabs from time immemorial have chosen the mother sand about their tent-poles as depository for their secret treasures. With them, buried wealth is often left untouched from father to son, each satisfied, Arab-like, in know-

¹ Paul Eudel, *L'Orfèvrerie Algérienne et Tunisienne*.



AN ARCADE IN THE GENERALIFE, GRANADA.

ing that his wealth lies hidden, nor caring to dig up or count it over—that profound delight of the Western miser.

Not least among the objects of interest in the Alhambra are the curious paintings on the vaultings of the three alcoves in the so-called Hall of Justice, which were added by Muley Hasan in his flourishing and all too brief reign. A writer of the sixteenth century speaks of this hall as that of the Kings' Portraits, and it is strange that the error should ever have arisen which supposed the central paintings of ten figures to represent the Council of the King, since portraits other than of the Sultans themselves could not have penetrated into a hall giving directly on to the women's court. That they represented Nasrite kings is evident from the two shields held at either end by dragons, and bearing on a gold ground the blazon belonging to the twenty-one sovereigns of that dynasty. And that this painting represents only the last ten before Boabdil (from Mohamed V. of the fourteenth century to Muley Hasan, his father) is proved by the words of Mendoza, who was born in 1503 and passed his early years in the Alhambra itself. Speaking of the additions supposed to have been made in the palace by one of its princes, he adds: "This royal residence is in its way famous. It was enlarged later by the ten kings who came after this prince, and whose portraits are seen in the hall of the palace. Several of these last have been known in *our time* by the veterans of the country." These kings are seen seated against a blue ground studded with stars, and wearing the bicoloured dress of Italian fashion, only introduced into Spain early in the fifteenth century, and which penetrated with the merchants of Castile or Genoa into the Moorish Court. The paintings on either side of this central alcove represent Romanesque scenes, probably some Castilian tournament in which perhaps one of the portrayed Nasrite kings figured.

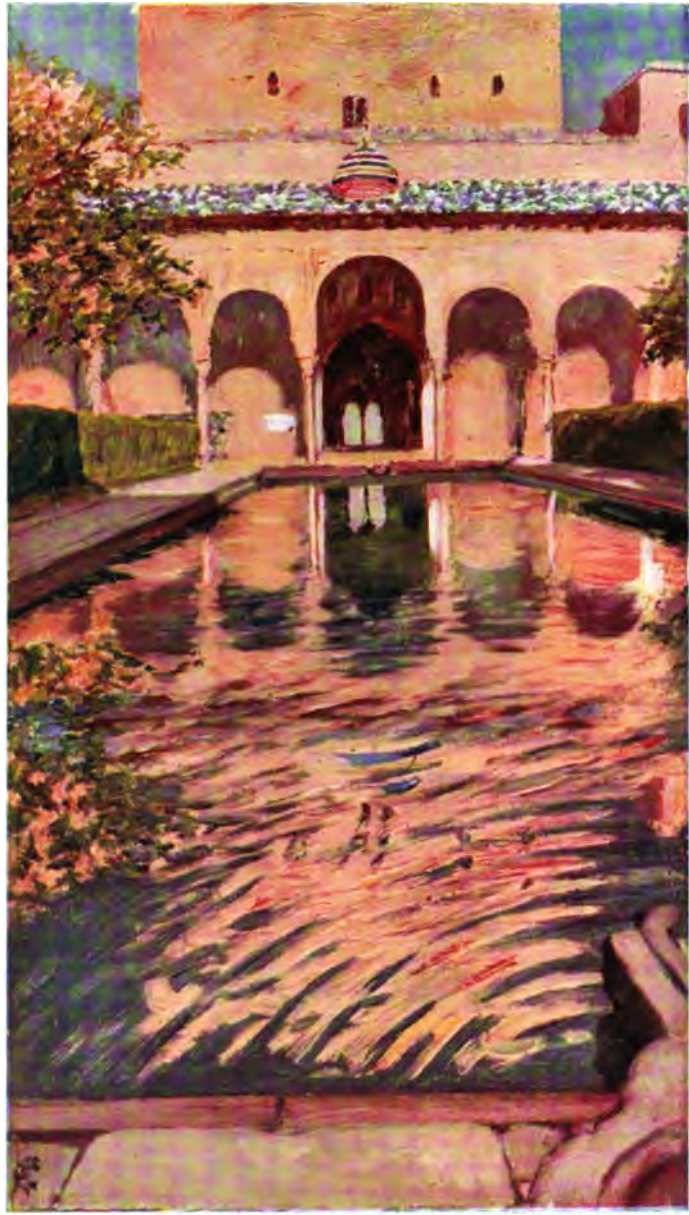
The dress of the women is Italian rather than Moorish, for the

only authentic design existing as to the style of feminine attire of that day, seen in a relief in the Cathedral, shows the women of Granada fleeing from the city garbed in loose trousers gathered in at the ankle, such as their sisters of Algiers still wear. Among the delightful confusion of figures and animals in these paintings may be seen buildings, fountains and many details, all of which bear the character of the Gothic style of the fifteenth century ; and all three paintings, whether executed by Moor or Christian, bear the trace of the same hand.¹

So rare are the paintings of Moorish days that we wonder sometimes what the interpretation of the art was in those times—when the artistic life of Italy was bursting the bonds of the great past.

In the days of Ibn Khaldoun it was already the Castilian fashion in the Court of Granada to decorate royal interiors with portraits of royalties or celebrities, a taste which had long held its sway in the East, where even portraits of the Prophet hung in the mosques, silent witnesses to the impracticability of a religion that could not embody its God and Prophet in human form. If the practice was directly against the accepted interpretation of the Koran, it was impossible for a people absorbing the culture of the old world to avoid one of the most graceful branches of taste and talent ; and the Moorish kings of Spain, like the Sultan of Morocco in the sixteenth century, no doubt excused themselves by regarding the works of art in their possession as “ exceptions to the rule,” and justified by the fact that only those men most worthy of commemorating were painted. This, however, must have given their work, if by Moorish artists, an absurd restriction, and it would be difficult to imagine the great masters of the past consenting to be handed down to posterity by only their royal portraits, those magnificent “ potboilers ” of genius. Easier is it to conclude that all Moorish paintings in the true sense were by

¹ G. de Prangey.



THE COURT OF THE MYRTLES, THE ALHAMBRA.

foreign artists, and that inaptitude and not religious restrictions restrained the Moors' efforts in other than ornamental architecture. The words of the Koran, "Oh, believers, wine, games of chance, and statues and the divining arrows are abominations of Satan's work. Avoid them that ye may prosper"—words which might apply merely to the creating of idols—would have been more determined in their sense had Mohamed really laid down commands against this taste which the Arabs of Arabia were totally free of. The law against wine-drinking arising from the decided liking for it displayed by the Arabs, was sternly defined. Yet how was this law carried out? Wine was the keynote to the poetry of the Omeyyade dynasty of Damascus, and dancing, song and music, though likewise forbidden by the Koran, were all in vogue among the Mohamedans of Spain, who only followed the teachings of their Prophet where it suited them. The religious crusade against the drinking of coffee fell to the ground before the weakness of the people for this favourite stimulant. So if the Moorish fashion for plastic arts or portrait-painting only occasionally passed bounds, such artistic abstinence pointed to the lack of any natural talent, and it was only in their adoption of all the foreign forms of culture that the interiors of the Moorish palaces were sometimes adorned with painted panels, their MSS. ornamented with exquisite miniatures, their textures woven with natural figures, and statues inspired by Greek and Byzantine art are said to have marked their artistic glory.

So these paintings in the Hall of Justice, tinged throughout with the rich spirit of the Italian Renaissance, seem curiously out of place here, where the gifts of the Moors had more than ever previously thrown off old traditions and evolved an art of build-



DESIGN FROM THE WALLS OF THE
TROCADOR, ALHAMBRA.

ing so completely their own. That the centre of their most cosmopolitan existence should have produced only what was purely Mauresque is in itself an interesting proof of Moorish personality, from the time that Granada had been founded as a kingdom, the spirit of tribe no longer existed in its old meaning. The great Mohamedan family who had sought refuge there after the fall of the old Khalifate of Cordova was composed not only of the descendants of the early emigrants from Syria, Arabia or Egypt, the rude Berber elements of the Almoravide and Almohade dynasties, but the mass of half-converted Spanish and foreign races who for centuries had been uniting under Islam. A single-handed race can draw more easily from the culture of others than a body of heterogeneous breeds and tastes, yet in the midst of this strange medley of humanity a last and beautiful ray of Moorish civilisation was seen. If it reflected through its very purity lights from far-off lands, they were not more than the troubadour poetry of that time breathed of foreign romance through the songs that had passed with the troubadour from strange country to country, uniting in the varied sentiments of a romantic age a single character. This was the charm of Granada, that into its last splendour so many rays from other worlds were distilled ; and whoever turns over the pages of Moorish story will find more of scope, if less of achievement, in the two centuries that preceded its fall than in the sturdier, because younger, centres of Cordova and Seville. In Granada may be traced the climax of Moorish art, while the decadent Mauresque, which struggled up in the midst of cruel restriction and the total destruction of Moorish home life—that starting-point in all their art—pointed more to the destroying influence of Spanish tyranny than to any natural decadence of the Moors themselves. They had ceased to bear their very name, and were but Mudejares, garbed in cloaks of greenish yellow, while their women wore a half-moon in blue on the right shoulder. If, following on the fall of

Granada, hundreds of erewhile converted Mohamedans of mixed Spanish nationality reverted to the Christian religion of their ancestors, through the persuasion that what was good enough for their forefathers was good enough for them, the purer-blooded Moors did not accept the new order of things so easily. We know that the final loss of Spain was bitterly felt by them, and, counting on a speedy return, they had taken with them, on leaving Andalusia, the wrought-iron keys of their homes. These keys, religiously preserved in certain families for long, constituted with them a title of noblesse ; and for long the memory of their lost country inspired the poets of the Western Maghreb, where the greater number of Moorish exiles had taken refuge.

“ Ah, regretted past ; ah, times long mourned and spent,
Ah, Lord, where are those days of pride, days of content ?
Ah, we have outlived them all, their evening seen,
(Alas, abandonment of Spain, how cruel hast thou been).

Ah, Granada, ah, pleasant were the nights we passed
In Granada, city of pleasure that could not last.
Ah, Lord, there beauty we found and fair disdain,
(Ah, harsh hast thou been to me, abandonment of Spain).

Ah, my God, by Thy mercy I would return once more,
I would revisit that happy spot, ah, once as of yore,
Ah, Lord, in this quiet hour unite me again,
(Alas, harsh hast thou been to me, abandonment of Spain).

Ah, Thou that deceivest not hopes, nor seest with eyes,
Ah, Lord, Thou to whom each command enfolded lies
In the letter of Kaf and Noun,¹ whose decrees are unseen,
(Ah, abandonment of Spain, how cruel hast thou been).”²

¹ That is to say, the imperatives of verb “to be ; to exist”—words used by God to give life to what He creates.

² Author (Tangier) unknown. Translated from *Chants Arabes de Maghreb*. Sonneck.

Most old towns are haunted by some eccentric living landmark; and Granada has its own, old and melancholy now, who wanders to and fro within the shadow of the palace.

The typical gipsy, Fortuny's old model, is less importunate than of old. It is not age that has changed him as much as the

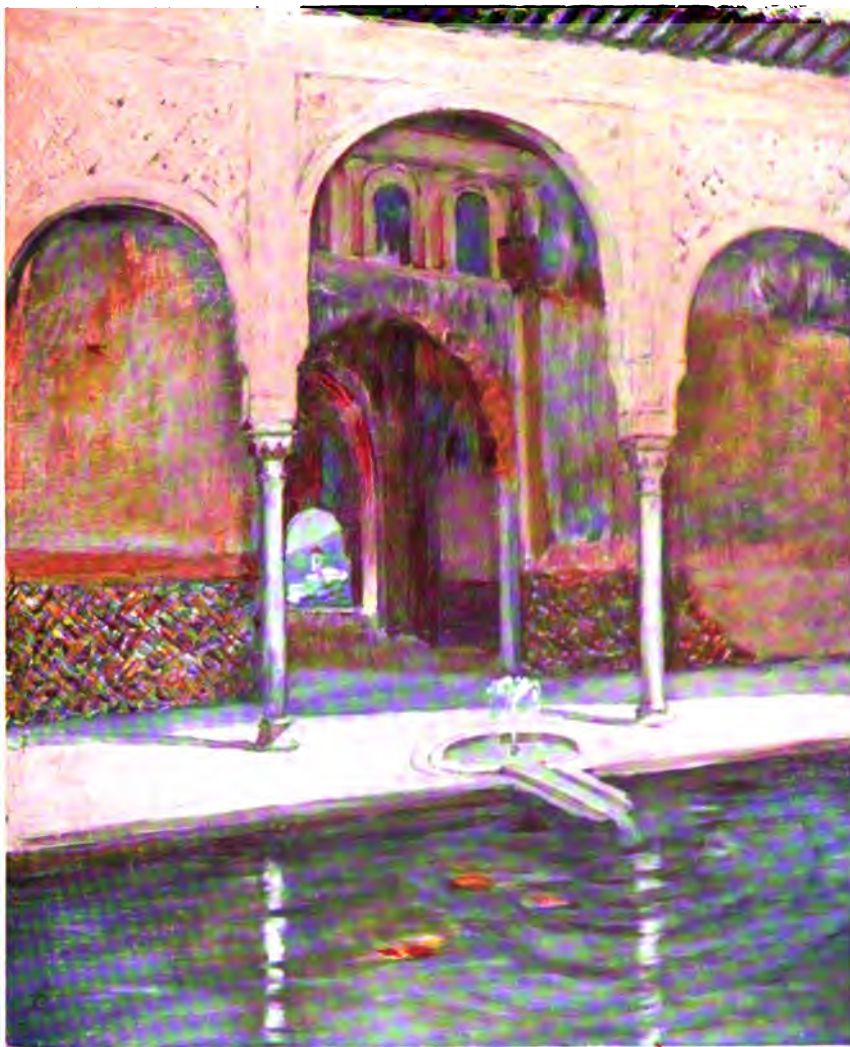


SPANISH GIPSY GIRL.

changing spirit of the times. His day is over, he is but a gaudy shadow of artist life of the last century, and he knows it. "Je suis venu ici parcequ'il n'y a pas de peintres," wrote Fortuny from Granada, but since then a whole school of artists has haunted the spot, and every painter, English, German or French, has found his picturesque attire attractive. "Now," says Fernandez, "the artists come, but they no longer paint me with my distinctive dress, my three varied coats. They paint a cloudy day, with four cypresses and a fringe of sky, such as one might see in a churchyard." His model days are over for ever, and even the traditions of those gipsy times passed within the elegant walls of the Alhambra, when the women washed

their rags in the Court of the Myrtles and the men lit their kitchen fires in the polished alcoves, have faded away. He now entertains the visitor as guide to the gipsy quarters, the squalid homes of those Gente de Tijeras who in the sixteenth century followed up the fall of Granada to add to the degradation of the place. Here, in this strange refuge the degraded but Romanesque gipsy has for centuries past installed himself with his paraphernalia of filth and shearing scissors; here he trims and doctors up his wretched donkeys

¹ Rusifol.



HALL OF THE AMBASSADORS—THE ALHAMBRA.

for the gipsy fairs, sharpening his wits and scissors alike against those of his own race, in the effort to exist at all, yet so indifferent to wealth as we understand it that the Spanish proverb, "Mas pobre que cuerpo de Gitano," is an ambitious effort to express where the extremes of poverty meet.

It is a strange scene, this colony of gipsy families, held together athwart the centuries by no ties of faith, only by consanguinity and language,—“ People among us but not of us, nomads of a progressive age, isolated by peculiarities of physique, language and social habits, of absolute materialism, and of a single rule of character, ‘ Self Will.’ ”¹ The Northern Spaniards find in Andalusian blood a distinct gipsy innervation, and here in Andalusia the magnetic glaze of the gipsy eye, as brilliant and as characteristic as in the gipsies of Morocco, is often seen even in the faces of the Southern Spaniards themselves. Alternately persecuted and encouraged—now for their quaint habits, mysterious arts, or their dexterity in iron work ; now for their repulsion to the ordinary ways of life ; now for their burrowing qualities, as though it were a crime to sleep in caves and holes before breath has departed—these Spanish gipsies were at one time even regarded as indigenous to Spain, and they had perhaps a firmer hold in Andalusia than anywhere else in the world. If a genuinely civilised breed of gipsy is ever to evolve, it should be in Spain or France, the two countries where they earliest penetrated in the fifteenth century, and where, through the influence of the French philosophical school, their condition was first ameliorated.

¹ Sir Richard Burton.

CHAPTER IV

Origins of Moorish Architecture in Spain

"The Moors introduced a style (of architecture) more fanciful and ornamental, which beside had this advantage: it brought with it no recollections of deterioration and decay."—LANDOR.

"Unclasp

My art from yours who can."—BROWNING.

MOHAMEDAN architecture, though far less profound than the Greek or Gothic, is more difficult to grasp because of its delicacy, its exotic growth, and the wider field that it covers. It is, and will always remain, elusive in style, origin, and even in name; for what is it? Arabian or "Moorish," Sassanian, Coptic, Persian or genuinely Mohamedan? Whereas antique architecture developed slowly from its own roots deeply implanted in the strong influences of Nature herself, and confined for expression to little else than temple or theatre, the art known as the Moorish of Spain is that of a mysterious and unchanging personality, a purely racial taste expressing itself through its victorious religion in every form of building from mosque to alcazar. This taste accentuated the Oriental character as it developed, but never underwent decline such as marked the Renaissance in later days. The humblest achievements of the Spanish Arabs are marked by the same grace and elegance, the same singularly fanciful character, as were their noblest palaces and loftiest minarets. It was an architecture noticeably human, expressing always the strong sentiment of the nomad for the desert, and, in spite of the verdict of one French critic who refuses to trace the germs of the development to their native source, all who have seen and felt the

influence of desert life will find it hard to separate its memory from the monuments of Spain. The spreading arches and the doming of the palm, the light supports of his tent, the knotted ropes of hide that bound them together, the "patterns wrought by the wind upon the sand," and the scalloped shell thereon which may be traced in many a dainty arabesque, the thirst of the desert which called for fountain or stream wherever the tent was pitched,—from these humble features of his familiar existence was gathered, perhaps, the cement with which the Arab bid the foreign artisan bind together old-world arts and make them his own. We trace in the empty alcazars and mosques Byzantine and Persian influences, but the breath that blows through them to-day is still the breath of the desert, fresh, distinct and proud.

So, in studying the architecture of the Moors in Spain, the only country where it *can* be studied in perfection, it might be easier to understand as well as to enjoy, if we admit that so much was theirs, but no more—the sentiment, not the essentials; the whole more than the parts. The essentials were almost entirely Persian as influenced by the Greeks of Byzantium, and we may safely affirm that, save in rare cases, the artisans employed by the Moors were Persian or Greek. Of how far the arts of the conquered Sassanians affected the Arabs, save in the matter of their adoption of the horseshoe arch, it is now impossible to ascertain, since but a shadow of their handiwork survived the destructive spirit of Omar. But there is much in the splendour and colour of decoration, as compared with the ephemeral lightness of the buildings of Spain, to suggest to us the fabulous beauty of the palaces of Persia which the Arab invaders had destroyed with a touch in their early and brutal ignorance. Persia was the first of the countries, because the weakest, invaded by the Mohamedan hordes, and as Mohamedan civilisation began to take form the Persians remained to the Arabs in much the same relation as did the Greeks to the Romans, save that the Arabs drew not

only from them for their wayward inspirations, but from all the old worlds whose glorious decay lay athwart their path. They possessed, therefore, a mind of wealth of which the extent is lost to us, holding as it did among its treasures the connecting links between the monuments of Alexandria and the palaces of Byzantium. No wonder, then, that however wisely is explained the riddle of architectural development in the East, Mohamedan buildings keep a mystery of their own, an individuality robbed from the riches the builders themselves destroyed Persian and Sassanian splendour, Byzantine and Greek forms—what a mosaic of beautiful arts! Nevertheless, Moorish architecture separated itself from the older schools into something quite unique as a whole, and so surprisingly beautiful that those who see it for the first magical time are often wonderstruck that anything so delicate and so poetical should have resisted the ages, owing its greatness not to marble and precious stones, but to brick, plaster and a rude cement.

In the examples existing to-day in Spain can be traced the gradual blending of the borrowed to the Moorish conception of the art. Cordova, city of learning as was Seville of music, offers in its great monument an architectural literature, the language roots of which are almost universal. Though the mosque of Cordova, which sprang from a Christianised growth of Roman débris—if such a term may be applied to the riches of the existing buildings that fell into the hands of the early Arabs—is not Arab-Moresque but Arab-Byzantine in spirit and profoundly influenced by existing forms, it expresses far more than the early use of an architectural grammar. The assertion that where the materials lie to hand the work is simplified, is rarely true in art. We see the younger nations of our day toying with the developed arts of other lands, and producing disastrous results; but the Arab builders from Mecca showed more than the merely adaptive or imitative spirit. Their old stock of desert pride,

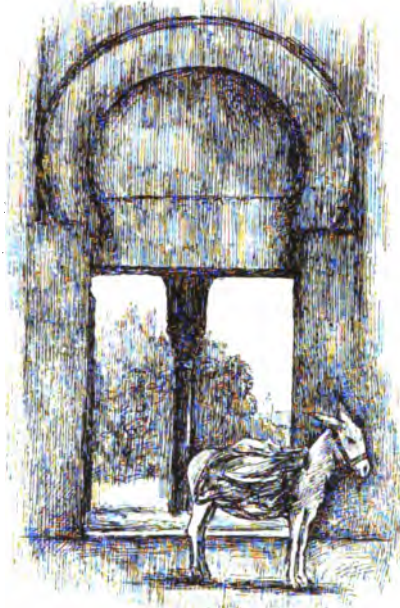
albeit but the pride of a primitive form of noblesse, was to avail them more in new soil than it had been able to do in their barren birthplace. If this mosque was identical in plan with the early mosques of Islam, it stood apart in the intellectual ambition which gave it real life. Abdur Rahman's desire that it might resemble the fabulously beautiful mosque of Damascus, exceed in magnificence the new sanctuary of Baghdad, and compare with even that of Jerusalem, showed a spirit of royalty as well as a leaning towards civilised standards of art. It is not without interest to note that of the two rival factions of Arabia to whose feud Mohamed had set fire, it was the Meccan noblesse of northern Arabia who founded the first period of the architectural greatness of Spain, and not the agriculturists of southern or happy Arabia, the defenders of the Faith whom the Omeyyades had so long looked down upon. As it was probably the descendants of the defenders who awakened agricultural life in the wilderness of Visigothic Spain, so the more aristocratic stock were the first to start there a new centre of architectural splendour and royalty combined which made the first period of Mohamedan greatness.

In the mosque of Cordova, the only one of the three great mosques of Spain now existing, the Arabs typified the more intellectual side of their religious and artistic development, almost displaying imagination and not merely fantasy in their striving after the infinite as far as column upon column reaching to invisible distances could express it. Without the richness of twelfth-century decoration or the minutiae of later Byzantine taste, in spite of its present blocked central nave, its ruined roof once so rich with form and colour, its diminished pillars and vanished vistas, we still find within the shaded labyrinth a hold on the imagination, of which only certain buildings keep the secret. The capilla Villa Visiosa, mingling mysteriously the styles of Cordova and of the most beautiful period of Seville in the Arab restorations of Don Pedro's reign, still fills one with



IN CORDOVA CATHEDRAL.

curious wonder as to its origin in the midst of the great mosque's simplicity. The twelve hundred lamps burning their thousand "arrobas" of sacred oil yearly have long been extinguished, but in no building does the play of tinted sunbeam upon wall and pavement seem to throw such bright and speaking illumination on Mohamedan power as here. Heights which, in the Gothic, measure their vainly yearning desire against the sky, are absent in this many-pillared maze where columns and shadows of columns, distances and ghosts of distance, made once an earthly infinitude for the faithful. How was it lighted, this dim religious darkness? Fergusson believes that the upper part of the outer walls consisted originally of an open colonnade. This marvel of the Middle Ages, considered as the greatest religious achievement of the Moors, might almost be regarded as achieved *in spite* of Islam. It rose during what may be termed the first of the two Arab periods, before the Arabs had transformed their faith into fanaticism and their creed into blind dogma, and when a disbelief in the Prophet was often barely dissimulated; during the period when this strange people seemed to be forcing the germs of original thought and intellect into lasting life. Alas, these germs never developed in the true sense, and when we witness the Alhambra in all its blinding beauty we see the work of a race who in their final creation have drifted back. The



DOOR OF THE COURT OF THE ORANGERY,
CORDOVA.

intellectual note has vanished, and throughout the graceful chambers and scented courts which breathe such exotic culture may be traced a curiously subtle prophecy of the "return to nature" of the Arab, the underlying sensuality of his religion, the foreshadowing of a most earthbound Prophet's Paradise, to which the nomad, unchanged after so many centuries, was again to turn his eyes. The Alhambra is one of those rare monuments which refined but decadent ages have produced—the mature fruit of the struggling centuries which voice not individual taste, but the drift of a whole race. Here the Arab-Byzantine has been transformed into the "Mauresque," an architecture of ornamentation in which, in the eyes of the severe critic, lies its real inferiority to other schools. The severest critic of all may be said to be one who had never seen it, but did not hesitate to term it "detestable."¹

It is, perhaps, idle to remark that however separated the Moorish architecture of Spain came to be from the Mohamedan of Asia, or even the Moorish of Africa, the origins of all are the same; the same spirit underlies their dividing growths, the same absence of the usual forms of decadence distinguishes them. It is impossible to realise the full character of this architecture in Spain without remembering that it is but a single exquisite limb of a now wasted body; and he who travels in Asia, Africa or Southern Europe must turn to the same sources for the breath of life which once inflated its mentality. Two conclusions would seem to confront him: either that the Arab, in his mad race with religion, developed a seat of intellect where none was or is to-day, or else flourished entirely by the "picking up of learning's crumbs," a nourishment which by itself has never before or since produced a nation. There is, therefore, a psychological mystery about the architectural language of this people which, however continuously written by foreigners, expressed

¹ Ruskin.

only what the Arab himself or the Arabised Moor cared to express.

As far as is known, the Arabs of Arabia before the birth of Islam had no system of architecture. The Koran mentions no form of art. They were a rude, uncultivated people, lovers of solitude, unconquered and little known by the old dynasties that closed them in. They were nomads, wandering Bedouins whose lives were spent in roving restlessly from camp to camp over their vast extent of barren desert, which barely produced sufficient to nourish them, dwelling in the most primitive tents or mud huts, and displaying none of the desire to erect buildings, which is the natural outcome of a people's taste to settle in one spot. A wanderer's life was imposed upon them by the peculiar conditions of the desert, a life which our civilisation of to-day is all unable to change. Only the richer dwellers in cities, the merchants, had brick houses flat-roofed as they are to-day, and no doubt clustered together so as to form the narrow belts of shade which are the Arab's conception of a street. The interiors were spread with carpets, and again with felt rugs, upon which the master and his guests sat, much as do the Arabs of our time. But no indigenous architecture seems to have existed, nor indeed literature, art, science, or any of the rightful weapons of civilisation. The Arabs were, perhaps, the most uncivilised of all the races who were destined to fall under their religious sway. They were ignorant, for all we know, of the very name of Africa as the name was then understood ; and it is strange to think that a people so old and so conservative, so far too from barbarism, should have left no milestone of their history, not a page to commemorate their love of story and song, not a weapon or a broidery to attest their chief delight and only luxury. Whatever buildings existed in Arabia at that day must have displayed the same simplicity as their character and ways of life. Even in Mecca there were but few buildings other than of sun-dried

bricks, and when Mohamed fled to Medina the mosque he built was of no rarer materials than bricks, palmsticks and plastered earth covered with palm leaves—the only example of Arab art uninfluenced by foreign forces, and of which no vestige of the original structure remains. What early building in religious history can compare with it in interest? Here, after months of indecision, the direction of the Mihrab pointing towards Mecca was decided upon, never afterwards to be changed. Here, we may presume, the Jewish habit of removing the sandals at the mosque door, which Jastrow considered is a survival of the still more ancient custom of removing all garments and entering the sacred presence uncovered, became a rigid law. Here bloomed near the sacred building the garden which Mohamed named his Paradise; and here, when Medina fell, were hitched the steeds of the victorious Omayyades, whose descendants were to spread the architectural germ of this earliest Mohamedan building all over Spain.

As we have seen, this early mosque was primitive to a degree, showing that the arts of the surrounding nations were totally lost upon the Arabs until they were themselves masters of those lands, where, in imitation of Western civilisation, the first effort was made to give a distinct form to their places of worship. But even this effort was slow to assert itself, and for the first half century after the Mohamedans had poured into Syria they seem to have built but little. Their taste was still too simple, and worship needed little else than the face turned towards Mecca and the call to prayer from any house-top. They were but warriors still; and however rich in monuments were the countries invaded, it must be remembered that the active impetus for building had even in those lands fallen into stagnation. Despoiling of Roman ruins to build up uninspired sanctuaries was the prevailing note of the eighth century, and it is all the more remarkable that this people, with no artistic tastes, should have shown from the



WINDOW OF THE CAPTIVE'S TOWER, THE ALHAMBRA.

first and in the midst of a dormant period so active a bent of their own.

That the Arabs were not originally a temple-building people was evident. This may have been partly the result of the too many forms of religion existing side by side in the seventh century—Judaism, Paganism and the various tribal forms of idolatry, all worshipped after their own fashion instead of combining to produce a national art. Only one of the seven temples in which the Arabs worshipped their own idols outlasted the destroying hand of Mohamed. This was the chief sanctuary of Arabia, the Pantheon of all the tribal gods, the primitive centre of a yearly festival whose origin is now lost—the sacred spot, in fact, to which pilgrims swarmed, as they still do to the Prophet's tomb. But this curious building of irregular cubic form—the Caaba or Cube—does not reveal in its stern simplicity the link between Arab and Mohamedan taste. Nor do the towers of Saana or the temples erected there by the Arabians of the South in opposition to that of Mecca ; or the marvellous reservoir of Merab, which Belkis, daughter not of woman but of genii, is said to have restored, indicate the germs of native genius, for these last were constructed by tribes who had disappeared before Mohamed's time. The massive megalithic ruins to be seen to this day on the coast of the Red Sea certainly mirror none of the art afterwards developed by the Arabs, and long before the era of Islam the people themselves seem to have lost all knowledge as to the origin of the few monuments in their country. These may have indicated the same spirit as did the monuments of Egypt—an idolatrous architecture which the Arabs never pursued—though they gathered something of their ornamentation from Coptic sources. So this glancing back into the great past tells us of nothing other than the life of tent and wandering warrior devoid of all the aspirations of development and culture, but it adds rather than detracts from the interest which

Mohamedan architecture rouses, and in the radiant colours of their kaleidoscopic art we trace ever the early freedom from traditions which made them in art, as well as in military success, the only untrammelled and ideally adaptive conquerors that the world has seen.

It was not till the influx of foreign architects into the capital of Islam that any real impetus arose there for building, and not till the ninth century—a century after the Arab invasion of Spain—that the native architecture began to take form. Then came the usual changes—the pulling down of the simple mosques and houses and the erecting of new. Buildings of stone and even of marble sprang up modelled after the neo-Roman style, with gardens attached, many of which are mentioned as still existing in the time of the Arab geographer Masardi in the thirteenth century. The architecture of the Arabs near their base and in the conquered countries of the East remained, from that time on, distinct from the style developed by the Moors of Spain, and might till further have diverged had it not been for the constant *rapport* between the Mohamedans of Spain and their cradle at Mecca in the pilgrimages to the sacred city. Spreading themselves out in every direction from their desert, not in large numbers but with a marvellous power of amalgamating other races to their banner, the Arabs naturally founded their architecture upon the models found in their path, and which were impregnated with the vices of the Roman style of that period from the baths of Diocletian to the buildings of Justinian. They converted Roman buildings to their use, changed temples and churches with their atriums into mosques, made use of the marbles and columns, and generally exhibited all the features of a rising but uninventive race. But this abundance of foreign material already shaped was an element against rather than in favour of their producing a style of their own, and it no doubt retarded the development of the Oriental spirit of Mohamedan art. It was

not till the establishment at Baghdad of the Abasside Khalifate in the middle of the eighth century, when the Arabs became more acquainted with the work of the Byzantine Greeks, that their taste in architecture took another direction and they began to exhibit a liking for only the rarer forms of building and decoration converted by constant use into the Saracenic style. Freed from the influence of each other's authority, these two inspired forces—the Omayyades of Cordova and the Abassides of Baghdad—both showed the same activity, and the architectural monuments of Spain and the vanished splendour of Persia belong to the same day, in one case rising under the sway of the descendants of the Prophet's family, and in the other under that of their erewhile Meccan antagonists.

So, affected in the beginning by the forms of the late Roman Empire, and later on inspired by the Greeks of Byzantium, a system was evolved which became distinctly Mohamedan. Little by little all traces of the early Christian Basilica, which somewhat influenced the mosques of the eighth century, completely disappeared. "He who might not imitate the scalloped shell, but could build the dome" borrowed this feature from the Persians, and in the East it became a constant adjunct, though in Spain it never flourished save as an ornamental detail. The dome is not by any means inseparable from the mosque, and is rarely found save when there is a chapel attached containing the tomb of the founder. So most mosques with tombs have domes, though many tombs are found apart without this addition.¹ As in the mosques of Constantinople and elsewhere the cluster of domes is often purely ornamental, and rises not over the sanctuary but over the centre of the edifice. In Syria, where the Byzantine triumphed, the cupolas glittered with mosaic, and the absence of this feature of architecture in Spain is certainly the most dividing of border-

¹ Lane Poole.

lands between the Moorish of Spain and the Arabian of the land of domes and minarets.

With these early changes of the mosque, the arcaded court gained also in importance and size, and the pointed arch so noticeable in the early mosques of Cairo became like an inverted Arab water-jar, "inflated beyond the sobriety of the original type."

The primitive mosque, somewhat like the Basilica of S. Paolo Fuori le Mura of Rome, was a long square closed in with walls, with a central court for prayer. The inner court, sometimes planted with orange trees or paved with stone or marble, contains almost invariably a fountain or well for ablutions. It is, in fact,

"a cloistered square,
Roofed by the sky, and in the midst a tank."

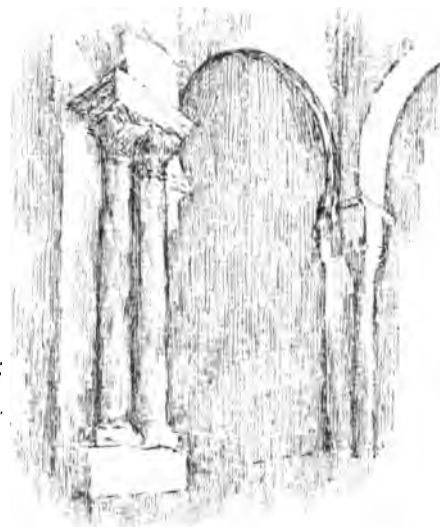
In the ancient mosque of Sidi Okba, near Biskra, there is a curious chamber attached to the court, in which tanks let into the stone floor allow the faithful to bathe their feet. No building conveys more of the primitive simplicity of structure than this fascinating relic with its thirty odd tree-trunks bending beneath the rude roofing, all white with the creamy brilliance of whitewash, and with a graceful and living vigour in every line. Let him who has imagined that the slim columns of the Alhambra and its suave arches remind him of a decadent oasis, of hothouse palms and desert rills, come to this desert sanctuary upon which the burning sun has played for so many centuries, and wander beneath the rude columns which seem to sway as invisibly as the palm trees without, and he will find a link between Arab and Moorish expression, one as purely primitive as the other is exotic, but both of the desert—the desert as it was yesterday and as it will be to-morrow.

Unlike the Persians, from whom they were to draw so largely for almost every form of art, the Arabs were never an artistic



THE CASTLE OF THE AMOUREL ON THE TAGUS, PORTUGAL.

people, though they had, as they still have, the blind, almost childish instinct for bright beauty so often to be found in uncritical races. Whatever germ of art was once growing from this explanted race during the time when the minaret rose with its original and slender form above the mosque of Alwalid in Damascus, or when Ahmed-bin-Toulon erected a mosque in which he purposely refrained from employing ancient materials, and endeavoured to produce an architecture distinct in character from that of either Pagan or Christian buildings, Islam finally robbed it of its spreading fibres as it crushed the life from science and philosophy. In wandering through the beautiful remains — never ruins—still to be found in Spain, we are often tempted to create a people who never quite existed, though they hovered so long upon the threshold of those qualities with which we would invest them. It is doubtful whether the Moors ever reached the pinnacle of creative power which their fantastic history and brilliant halo of art might lead us to suppose, and in their buildings vain is it to seek for profound genius or intellectual achievement. But the story of architecture remains incomplete without the delicate link of Moorish fantasy woven from so many woofs in a great age between the simplicity of the old forms and the rising aspiration of the Gothic. It was formed from old traditions into something new and strange. It attained perfection through materials infinitely simple and with a minimum resource



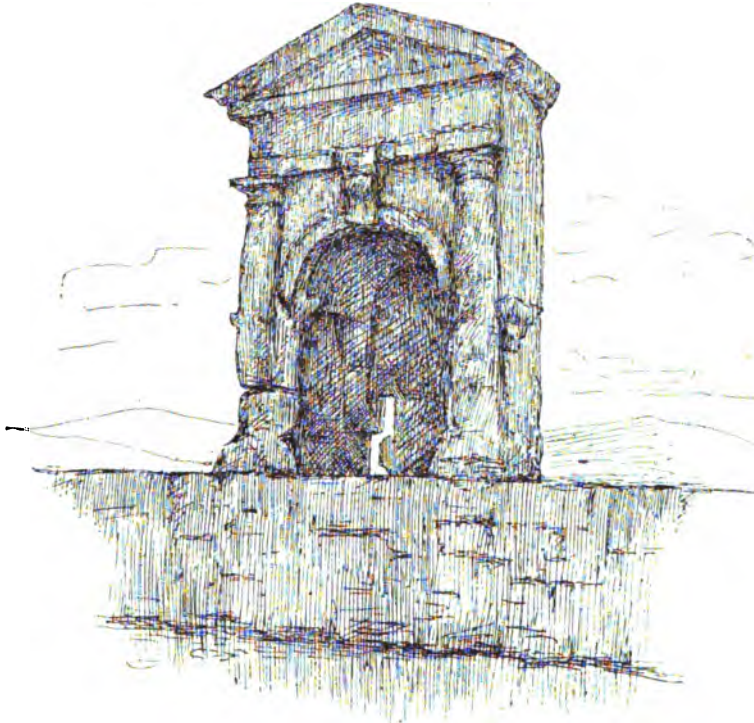
MOSQUE OF SIDI OKBA, KAIROWAN.

to the quarry. A conquering people, says Reber, rarely imposes its architecture upon the subjugated country; yet it tinged all the varied schools, the Spanish and the French Gothic, which existed side by side in Spain from the twelfth to the fifteenth century, and that in spite of the many objections to the mingling of religious styles. Back over the very lands from which the Arabs had borrowed so many jewels, they spread their work like a beautiful tapestry over Persia, India, Syria, and Palestine and Egypt. Yet to all other forms of architecture that of the Mohamedans remains subtly opposed in spirit, as were the Moors of Spain themselves after centuries of European influence to the people they had conquered. Human and architectural reserve separate them and their art from the Western nations. Nothing discloses the beauty of the Arab's mosque or alcazar to the vulgar gaze, and his building is still as closely veiled as are the Moorish women of to-day and of the past. The most perfect creations shrink from notice with a delicate refinement of pride, and on entering the precincts of a Moorish interior the raising of the veil is as sudden as delightful.

Besides this unique reserve there may be traced another feature opposed to the spirit of all other forms of art—its fatalism. Strange as it may seem, one of the charms of Moorish work lies in the fact that it never indicates any resistance to time or fate, but accentuates its own fragility with a fatalistic calm. This fatalism, so strong a feature not only of their religion but of character as well, may be easily traced throughout the Alhambra, where the most tender workmanship is exposed to the sky, and where the very walls are hung with a fragile lacework of Damaskeen embroidery.

The feature which, together with Corinthian columns, formed the chief characteristic of the first period of Arab architecture in Spain—a feature at once most admired and most criticised—is the familiar horseshoe arch. The name, though not a very happy

one, has been fastened to this form of arch by English archæologists for the last century : and who knows who was first responsible for it? The only compass used was, as it is still to-day in the East, the eye of the architect, which would seem to



ON THE BRIDGE, CORDOVA.

have been guided by the almost but never quite measured drooping of a palm leaf ; and as an instance of the fact may be mentioned the arches of a modern building in Tunis, which were imitated from those of the Archevêché in Algiers. The architect was forced to cast exact moulds of each arch, finding it practically impossible to reproduce them by measurement.

From Roman days on it is ever to the arch that we turn for the distinguishing feature of building ; and as the ogive form with

its infinite variety became the favourite in India, so in Spain the horseshoe form became universal, and gained in character as the Moorish style diverged from a temporary sympathy displayed by the Arabs of the East with the Gothic shape and the pointed arch, neither of which are met with in Spain till the eleventh century. The horseshoe arch seemed to be the natural outcome of the rounded Roman, as is seen at Cordova, but its origin is exceedingly old. The Arabs, no doubt, borrowed it from the Sassanians in the first instance, and its peculiar characteristic of introducing a diameter wider than the space between the supports was sufficiently important to develop in time into a new architectural form. This form was accentuated into a very decided style by them. If there is much to criticise in this horseshoe arch springing from above the too expanding capitals, which often forced the arch in its turn to expand on either side so as to balance its own weight, it is useless to criticise separately the combining features of Moorish style. We judge architecture—perhaps all art—by too many laws and too few standards. The fantastic curve which the Arabs loved—if it must be admitted, too well—is an instance of the truth of Disraeli's enthusiastic words written after the first sight of Moorish building in Spain: "However there may be a standard of *taste*, there is no standard of *style*."

The architecture of Spain is still strongly influenced with all the characteristics of Moorish days. The jutting windows, nailed doors, whitewashed walls, tiled patios and fountains, are all in constant use. Moorish carpentry was borrowed for Gothic buildings, and left its mark. But while the more fanciful side of those triumphant arts prevailed, and do still prevail, the architecture itself has been little imitated, and never perfectly. The Moorish palace or dwelling was quite unsuited in its construction to any adaptation of European ways and habits, and could only linger on in Spain during the sixteenth century for that residue of Moors who escaped the first expulsion. For these imperfect



TOWER OF SAN VICENTE AT BELEM, LISBON.

specimens of native taste we must turn to Algeria, Tunis or Morocco, where are found a few old houses full of complicated turnings, low rooms, and inner "guest" courts, where the fountain plays ceaselessly—houses in which, with an appearance of ample space and musical patio after patio, is rarely found habitation room sufficient for the smallest family.

The Arab of to-day looks at the frightful many-storeyed buildings, which are growing up all over Algiers and the European quarter of Morocco, with far more wonder than distaste. To him they are rather amazing than ugly, whereas the low white structures with square tiled windows and arched doors escape remark. But the enlightened Moor, in rubbing against the ugly details of a forced civilisation, may perhaps see that the old homes of his aristocratic ancestors had something of elegance about them which the modern ones lack. The ugliness of an Arab city modernised is such as might well penetrate even the profound indifference of the native mind, as it awakes in even some Europeans the regret that their civilisation corrupts—as one of the most cultured men of our time has admitted—whatever it touches.

But with the disappearance of the real Moorish architecture on the coast-line of African soil the cult for the old Moorish of Spain has made strides of late, and we realise here, as nowhere else, what its perfection signified; for "as blossoms appear upon the outermost branches of a tree, so the highest development of Arabian culture was reached in the most remote country to which it had extended."¹

Impossible to grasp the faintest idea of what this represents until Spain is visited, so we visit Spain from end to end for little else. "Far better," says a Spanish writer, "that Spain should lose a province than the Alhambra." The better has not been denied her.

¹ Reber.

Framed within the wild and almost gloomy beauty of Spanish landscape, the first sight of the Alhambra, the mosque of Cordova, the alcazars, and not least the cluster of Toledo's towers and gates, dawn upon the stranger with unexpected weirdness, effacing all the impressions with which he has come armed. The unravelling in a once conquered country of the erewhile conqueror's art, is, as it were, to touch upon a streak of sunset in full day. Wherever the colour-thirsty Moors lingered, whether in the North or on the henna-tinted earth of Andalusia, a glow of smouldering splendour seems still to linger ; the streak of blood still shining in their legendary cement.¹

¹ The Saracens were said to mix blood with their mortar.



IN THE GARDEN OF THE ALCAZAR, SEVILLE.

CHAPTER V

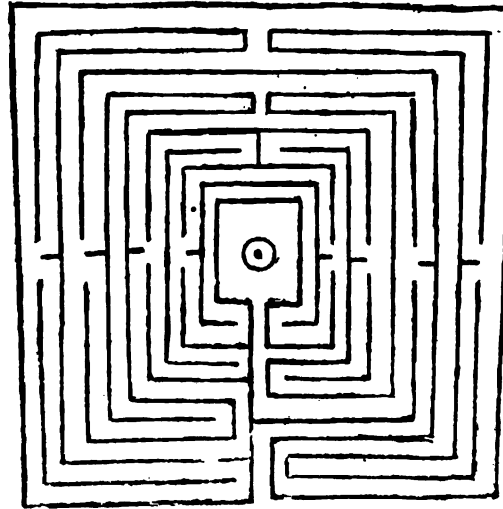
The Moorish Gardens of Spain

"There were gardens bright with summer rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree."—COLERIDGE.

"Los càrmenes de Granada no son romànticos ni primitivos ni modernos.
Tienen su caràcter heredado de los àrabes, su tradicion propia y su
propia estilo."—RUSIÑOL.

Nor least among the landmarks of Spain are its gardens. To see them, and them only, it is well worth while to journey thence ; to linger during long spring days in the sun-warmed grounds of the Alcazar at Seville, or in the shadowy corners of the Generalifé at Granada, pondering, if so inclined, upon the story attached to the growth of imaginative landscape in Moorish Spain, or, perhaps, vaguely wondering from whence arose the complicated geometrical architecture of these unique pleasaunce haunts which imitate so closely the spirit of the people's buildings. The Moorish garden is brilliantly suggestive of a race unlike any other in the world, nor has it evolved from the natural configuration of the country, as in the case of Italy, where all the land is a garden "au sens magique que reçoit ce mot quand il désigne les lieux mystérieux de la légende depuis le jardin biblique des commencements du monde jusqu'aux jardins enchantés d'Armide." Here in Spain it is as an oasis, the gift of the Moors rather than any natural growth. The opinion that gardens grow almost entirely from the formation and natural vegetation of a country is not always exact. Nobody can admit that Spain, a land of quarries, was as naturally suited to the brick and stucco work of the Moors

as to the Gothic form of building, and had the Moors gardened according to the soil, they would have indulged only in olive groves and orchards, rather than in the terraces of exotic plants, laden with the language of flowers, in which they so delighted, the tortuous aqueducts and *eaux d'artifices* which form the basis of their style. Their happy taste for ornamentation found a new

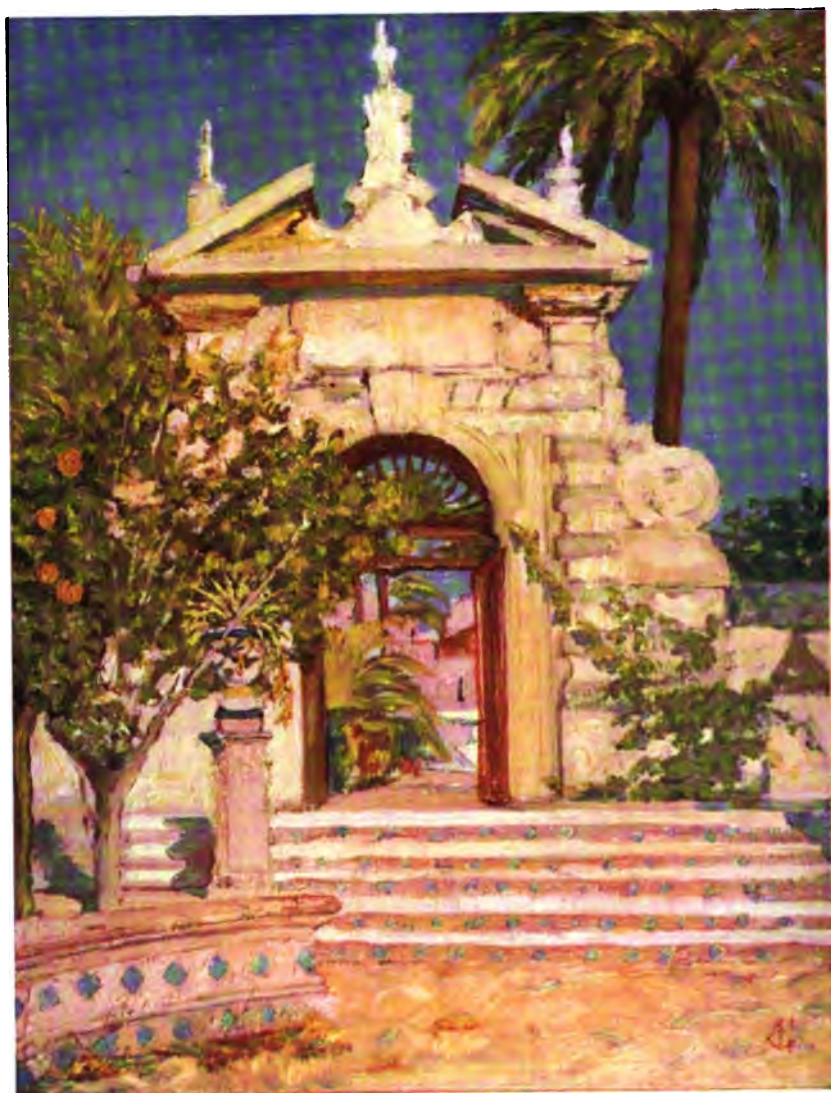


PLAN OF MAZE IN THE PAVILION OF CHARLES V.,
IN THE ALCAZAR GARDENS, SEVILLE.

field in outdoor art, and in that most complete specimen of an Arab garden, the Alcazar of Seville—that closed-in labyrinth which helps us to understand the allusion to the “walled-in garden” in the Song of Solomon—the endless variation, the courts within courts, the tiny fountains and tiled baths, the terraces and orangeries, display the same fantasy as seen in their palace interiors.

They delighted, too, in foreign trees, and the “parent palm” of Cordova was but the first of a long series of exotic transplantings, such as the Romans, in spite of a somewhat limited flora, had, like the Italians of to-day, never cared to pursue. So, however much of the palm of early imaginative gardening and fantastic play of irrigation belongs to the Romans, the adaptation of it to Spain, and the use there of foreign and transplanted plants, seems to have been purely Moorish.

The Moors were probably the only people in Europe in the Middle Ages who made of gardening a feature of luxury, so imparting into it a wayward charm not found in other countries,



A GATE IN THE GARDEN OF THE ALCAZAR, SEVILLE.

where the mediæval gardens of the same period were ecclesiastical rather than princely, and where the most skilled horticulturists devoted their best talents to the utilitarian grounds of monasteries. One might almost assert that they were the only people who ever conceived of gardening in a purely decorative spirit, from no ambition to overpower Nature with the planting of parks on artificial mountains, as in Babylon ; consecrating it to no deity, cultivating their extended flora for no fashion of chaplet-weaving, and combining the useful with the ornamental only as an accidental detail. With the Moors, all their arts breathed only fantasy, developed from the Roman school on a minutely delicate scale, purely for pleasure, for the joy of living, of wandering amidst scent so delicious that it "required a sigh to inhale it." Never, perhaps, did a Moorish gardener in Spain dream of setting off the beauties of leek and violet side by side.

But with this allusion to the humble leek or onion—classic vegetable !—it is curious to note how the taste and fashion for it came and went among the Spanish kings. Alphonso of Castile founded an order of Chivalry, the statutes of which forbade its members the use of the onion, and those who dared to yield to its temptation were exiled from court for a month. Yet in the seventeenth century Madame d'Aulnoy remarks that the passion for strong perfumes in food had reached such exaggeration that at the procession of the king and his young bride through the streets, "buffets" were erected along the route, and each person held in his hand an onion, "*de l'ail, des ciboules dont l'air est tout parfumé.*" Perhaps Owen Meredith was thinking of that when he wrote :

". . . The Spanish
Smell, I fancy, of garlic."

But, save in the flower beds of a Roman garden, the leek is out of place among flowers, and the Moors delighted in perfumes of a gentler kind : aromatic shrubs, thyme, myrtle, jasmine and

rose. The full meaning of what a Moorish garden can express is all unknown to him who has never lingered within reach of this mingled perfume, within sound of the peculiarly low ripple of Moorish fountain or stream gurgling over brilliant tiles from terrace to terrace, dark with the shadow of cypress or palm. With the thirst of the desert in the blood, as it were, its unbroken and often terrible silence unforgotten, the Moors built in the midst of running streams, cool and unquenchably musical. They luxuriated amidst a vegetation that knew no season : myrtle, box and laurel, the shadow of palm, the gold of citron and orange. Ah, Ternissa, how could you say,—

“I hate those trees that never lose their foliage,
They seem to have no sympathy with Nature,
Winter and summer are alike to them ?”¹

If these sites, in spite of their delicate beauty, were often the scenes of treachery and tragedy, if for centuries garden and battle-field in Andalusia never lay apart, and blood was shed as freely as roses were gathered, vain is it now to seek for the Cæsar's life-blood in the colour of every rose. Let us seek only for the breath of poetry, which is lasting and fresh as the flowers of to-day's spring. Long after the glory of the Moors faded, the wayward charm of their fountains and patios and orange groves lingered on, and still

“Many a garden by the water blows.”

Strongly characteristic as are these gardens of Spain, they must have developed through stages almost as varied as Moorish architecture itself, for the sources the Arabs drew from were always as many as the countries they conquered. From the flowery descriptions of the old Arab writers one might gather that every garden was a vast “paradise,” watered by numerous streams and surrounded with walls, as vast as that in which

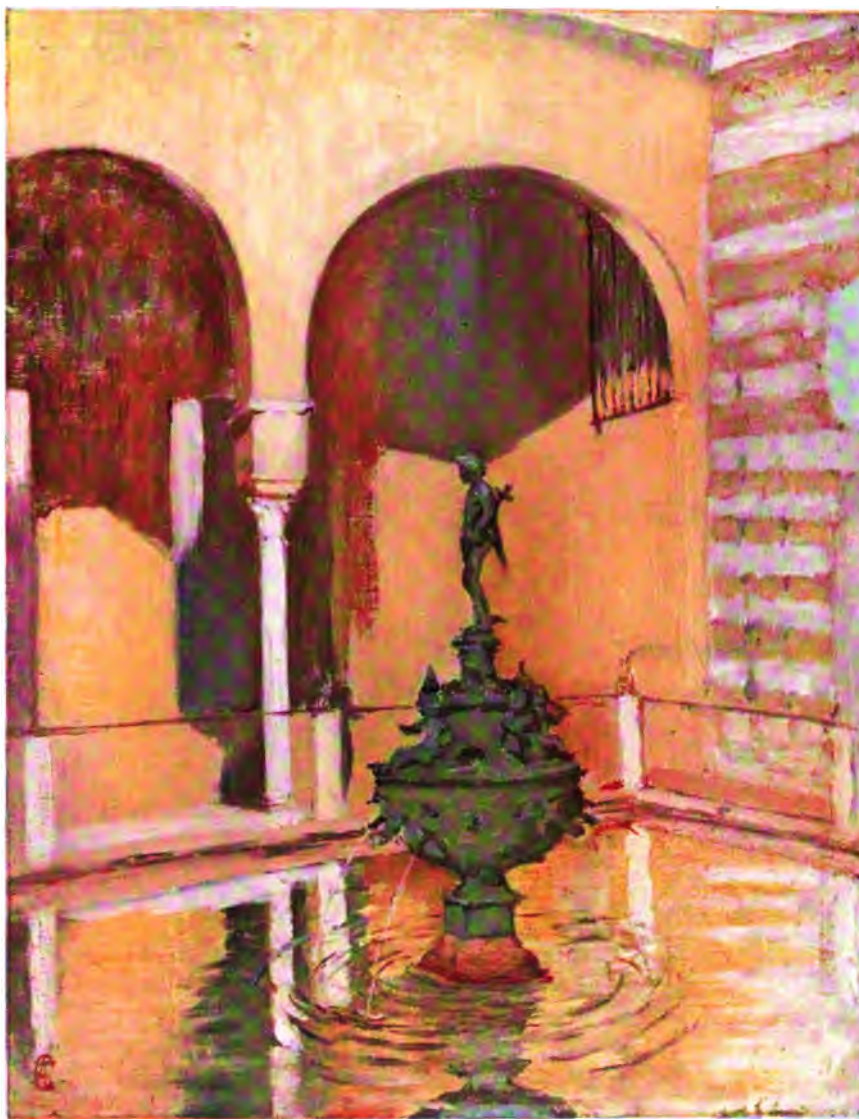
¹ *Imaginary Conversations*. Landor.

Cyrus reviewed his Greek army ; such parks, in fact, as the Persian kings and satraps surrounded their palaces with. The grounds of Cordova and those of Baza may have been modelled on this plan ; but such vast plantations were little adapted to the palaces of the Moors and for their harems. Something at once more fanciful than the classic gardens of a Roman villa, less exquisitely natural than those of the Greeks, was needed to satisfy the secluded life and monotonous social existence of the Moorish interior. Whoever has glanced over the designs of an ancient Egyptian garden—the only genuine desert garden—will trace a certain resemblance to the long or square water-tanks, planted on either side with rows of fruit trees, which repeat themselves in varied designs from end to end, while all is enclosed within a high wall. Whether across the Roman age the Arabs gathered any inspiration from these cultivated oases is but conjecture, but the expressions of all desert people, however countless the changes rung upon them, all have a common root, of which the ages never lose the thread.

Nevertheless, if we would understand the tangible characteristic of the Moorish gardens in Spain, we must turn very especially to Roman days for the architectural spirit which distinguishes them. We English are said to talk of *planting* a garden ; the ancient Romans talked of *building* one. This building spirit, which expressed itself in terraces and courts, was the last outcome as it were, though on so dainty and regulated a scale, of the architectural tastes in the landscape gardening of the ancients, those mad flights of an irregular imagination which sought to toy with a giant Nature as in the hanging gardens of the past. The pleasure of “building” within a limited compass, terraces, pavilions, fountains and streams ; of training the playful mystery of Nature without any gigantic struggle with her forces ; is dwelt upon in the description of Pliny’s Tuscan Villa—a description to which, once familiar with Moorish gardening, one may well turn with

infinite delight. "In front there is a terrace laid out in different patterns and bounded with an edging of box ; then comes a sloping ridge with figures of animals on both sides, cut out of the box trees, while on the level ground stands an acanthus tree, with leaves so soft that I might almost call them liquid. Round this is a walk bordered by evergreens, pressed and trimmed into various shapes. . . . Almost opposite to the middle of the portico is a summer house standing a little back, with a small open space in the middle, shaded by four plane trees. Among them is a marble fountain, from which the water plays up and lightly sprinkles the roots of the plane trees and the grass plot beneath them. In places there are grass plots intervening, in others, box shrubs, which are trimmed to a great variety of patterns . . . here and there are small pyramids and apple trees, and now and then, in the midst of all this graceful artificial work, you suddenly come upon what looks like a real bit of the country planted there . . ." and so on, till we gaze round at the laughing "architectura verde," the stiff eccentricity of the cut hedges, and the "Images cut out of juniper or other garden stuff" which Bacon condemns as only fit for children, the bits of natural wilderness that peep from between the trim vistas, the fountains playing so lightly from their basins, as though a laughing and classical past had enchanted this tiny world of perpetual sunshine. . . .

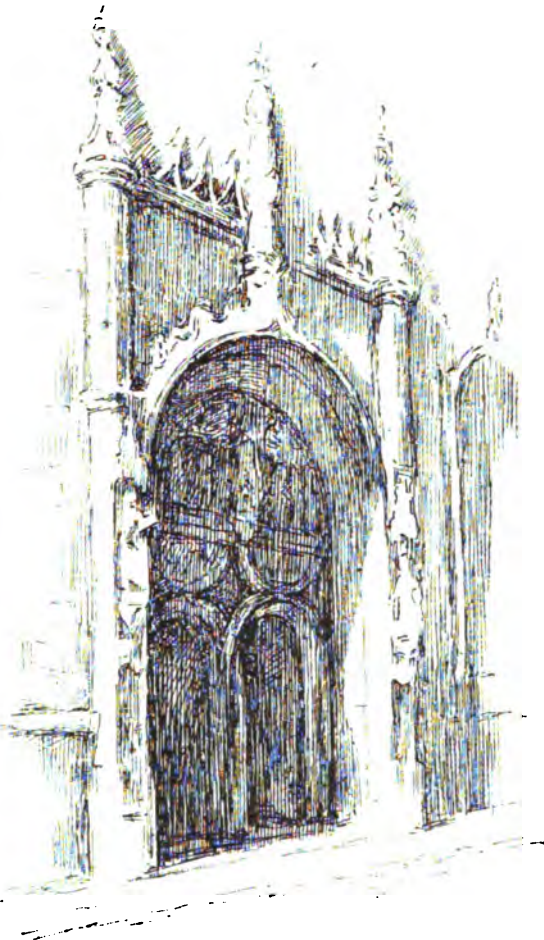
After so long a lapse of time it would be impossible to affirm how much of this garden of the Alcazar has survived the days of the Moors. Their adaptation of the Roman aqueduct to their peculiar love of fountains remains probably but little changed. As in the Generalifé and other gardens of Granada, so in the bosquets and parterres of the Alcazar may be traced, says de Prangey, "an imitation, if not a direct continuation of the taste that presided over Moorish gardens. What particularly distinguished them were their *pieces d'eau*, usually square, sometimes long, with often a fountain in the centre, or sometimes



FOUNTAIN IN THE GARDEN OF THE ALCAZAR, SEVILLE.

even, as in the garden of the Chartreuse at Seville, a pavilion open on all sides, and which recalls exactly the one Alberti describes in speaking of the sheet of water in front of the Palace of Ziza in Sicily." The fountains, water jets, and cascades still preserve their Moorish features, for the tortuous fashion of the eighteenth century did not change their site, and I am inclined to think that the true spirit of a garden defies change as resolutely as the Moorish buildings resisted complete transformation in the hands of Philistine princes. If the monuments of the Moors lent themselves easily to imitation or restoration in more or less doubtful taste, the primal conception was difficult to lose or hide, and even the delicate intricacy of these gardens have changed but little, we may imagine, since the calm of Mohamedan fatalism pervaded them.

The first impression made on entering the garden of the Alcazar is enhanced by the strangeness of its approach. Passing



CATHEDRAL, SANTA CRUZ, BELEM, LISBON.

the great tower of the cathedral a somewhat severe court is traversed like a great Moorish vestibule shutting us, as it were, from the reign of Christendom. Through vaulted loggia and dark tunnel-like passage, the visitor emerges to the flash of sunlight on golden walls and the tinkling waters of a fountain, in whose dark green depths a bronze Hermes is reflected profoundly. The vestibule this of some Aladdin's palace, as if the god himself had evoked it from his own dream realm. It would be difficult to do justice to the subtlety of the art that has planned and elaborated this garden and succeeded in placing such varied enchantments, and so many vistas in so small a compass. Beneath the steps descending from the fountain through a great bower of magnolia trees, is caught the first glimpse of "*arquitectura verde*," flanked by gaily coloured tiles, and the ear is ever enchanted by the murmur of a tiny fountain below. But this little garden enclosed by a high wall is only the prelude to a vaster one which by subtle proportion and towering palms about its lofty central fountain seems to suggest a dainty oasis. On no side can any suggestion be obtained of the town which lies about, and on one hand a vast wall, covered with an elusive mass of rococo structure, though in itself of bad taste, seems only to add to the mysterious illusion of distance.

Beyond the fountain, through another arched door a remotely sheltered pagoda is seen. This seems the very sanctum of the spirit of this exquisite oasis. Hidden away and shrined by trees, screened as if from the intruder, it is perhaps the very gem of the whole tangle. Charles V., ambitious Philistine though he sometimes showed himself to be, is happily seen at his best in his additions to the grounds of the Alcazar, and his building of a pavilion in their midst was in keeping with the Moorish style. Such a conceit as this, surrounded by roses crowding from every side, might well awaken in fancy the



THE CANAL IN THE GARDEN OF THE GENERALIFE, GRANADA.

mysterious palace of some Belle au Bois Dormant. What more lovely fantastic sanctuary could be imagined for the centuries' sleep of the royal maiden limned out in the old Germanic folklore, but whose real origin, as has now been demonstrated, is from the enchanted land of Oriental fable? This tiny bijou of the sixteenth century is indefinable in its lustre of Moorish influence, a delicate hybrid in which the meeting of two races seems to have produced for a moment an unique flower. The blue tilework reflects responsively a sky which is of the Orient, and the orange trees drop their fruits in the golden gleams.

Another exit from the central garden leads into the neglected maze of myrtle, long robbed of all its mystery. But wild as it is now; no longer

“reduit secret

Qu'un art mystérieux semble voiler exprès,”

there is a wonderful fascination in its vaguely scented alleys, and still is it a happy landmark in the fashioning of gardens—happy, since the outdoor life of the labyrinth is associated with the added security of fifteenth-century pleasure grounds. It is a fitting boundary to the garden's wing, this playful addition of the Spanish king, but now no longer royal—just a gay haunt for the Sevillians on their days of festa to race through its wild tangle with the laughter of holidays, or sit and drink their harsh white wine and eat their candied fruits on the tiled seats outside. One is tempted in this only labyrinth of Spain to linger a while over the legend of the maze, wondering why a people so geometrically inclined as were the Moors, never sought to revive after its long centuries of sleep the old labyrinthine imagination of the ancients, which would have fitted so perfectly into the decoration of their walls and floors; or why the Roman use of it, whether serious or playful, never inspired them. Only a little later and the spirit of the Renaissance, swayed by passionate love of mystery, seized upon this emblematic expression, symbolising in it for a while the mystery of

life, till the maze became as the emblem of this world's complicated paths surrounding its goal (the gate of Jerusalem), and these "roads to Jerusalem," as they were called, inspired the fashion of working maze figures in stone or mosaic into the pavements of many old French cathedrals. But symbolic mystery had no meaning for the Moors, and the delicate imaginativeness of the maze passed northward into England—that very land of mazes since Roman days—not through the interpretation of Moorish arabesque or garden fashion, but through French and Italian revivals. Alas! the spirit of the garden labyrinth belongs now very distinctly to the past, and there be few in our day, as an old writer says, "that set their mazes with lavender, cotton spike, marjoram, and such like, or isope and thyme, or quickset, privet, or plashed fruit trees."

For another specimen of an almost perfectly preserved Moorish garden we must turn to the Generalifé of Granada, which lies separated by a ravine from the Alhambra, under an overhanging point on which once stood the beautiful garden of Dazalharoza. Whatever changes have injured the building of the Generalifé, the grounds, for some inexplicable reason, have entirely resisted the desultory taste of later days, and are still, as in the days of the Arab Dernburg, "the proverbial garden by the abundance of its roses, by the clearness of its waters, the fresh breath of its perfumed breezes." Entering by a little door we pass beneath the dead white of the arcades, gleaming with the peculiarly soft warm colourlessness of whitewash, like the "plumage of a swan." The breath of flowers fills the long patio, rising from the wild mass of brilliant blossoms on either side of the canal. Passing along this, we skirt the Mauresque entrances and reach the historic court where once stood

"Some young cypress tall and dark and straight,
Which in a queen's secluded garden throws
Its slight dark shadow on the moonlit turf
By midnight, to a bubbling fountain's sound."



ARCHITECTURA VERDE, GENERALIFE GARDENS, GRANADA.

And still a shadow lies there, cast by a queen's cypress, bowed with silent years.

From the terraces and through the Mauresque openings of the Generalifé the most exquisite view extends. How often must Fortuny have lingered here in those happiest days of his life, enjoying the quiet and freedom of Granada which the big towns denied him, the open-air atelier in which he worked alone surrounded with perfumes and stimulated with its eccentric beauty; able, too, to look down upon the ruddy shell of the Alhambra itself. "Figure toi," he wrote, "la Villa Borghèse au sommet d'une montagne entourée de tours moresques, et au centre le plus beau palais arabe d'un tel luxe et d'une si grande finesse d'ornements que les murs paraissent couverts de guipure."

It is impossible now to separate these haunts of Granada from the memory of Spain's great modern painter. Fortuny loved them all, and what the artist loves, passes into his work, till those who see it dream also of what inspired it. Never was the spirit of that work more exquisitely divined than by Thomas Couture in a letter written a few years after Fortuny's early death.

"Oh, les belles choses ! j'en ai rêvé toute la nuit. C'est la nature dans ce qu'elle a d'aimable, c'est la vie, c'est la lumière, c'est la floraison, c'est le coloris comme le fait Dieu par ses fleurs.

"Il n'est plus de la peinture, ce n'est plus du travail, ce n'est plus d'un homme. Des papillons ont frolé ces toiles en y laissant leurs parures, des feés ont pressé les plus belles fleurs pour les colorer. Tout pétille de soleil et d'esprit, tout se transforme dans ce prisme magique. Le vulgaire devient poétique, la satire y devient aimable. La guêpe comme la rose est du butin empressée et les ailes frémissantes elle va raconter à ses amies parfumées nos laideurs humaines. . . ."

¹ Letter written in 1875 to the late Mr W. Stewart after the artist's visit to his gallery containing a collection of Fortuny's works. In the possession of Mr Julius Stewart, Paris.

Listen to the description of Navagero who visited Granada in 1526, the very year of Charles V.'s visit to the old Moorish capital, which so appealed to the artistic side of the king's nature :

“Leaving the walls that encircle the Alhambra, we enter by a secret back door into the beautiful gardens of the other palace, which stands above and is known as the Generalifé. This palace, though not very large, is nevertheless an exquisite edifice, and with its magnificent garden, and *caux d'artifices*, the most beautiful I have seen in Spain. Many courts it has, all amply provided with water, the principal one being divided with a canal of running water and full of lovely orange trees and myrtles. A loggia or large ‘bellevue’ is there found, offering a fine view, beneath which the myrtle grows almost to the height of the balcony. These myrtles are so thick and leafy, and lift themselves to such an equal height over the wall that they seem like a green and abundant carpet. The water flows through all the palace, and when desired even into the rooms, some of which seem the most delicious summer haunts. In one of the courts, full of rich and shady trees, is an ingenious water trick. Certain secret conduits are unclosed until suddenly he who stands upon the green plot of grass sees the water gushing beneath his feet and over them, until again with the same unseen touch the conduits are reclosed. There is also another court beneath, not very large, but so encircled with dense and luxuriant ivy that the walls are barely detected. This court stands upon a rock surrounded with many balconies from which extends the view far below to where the Darro flows. It is a lovely and smiling scene. In the centre of this patio stands a magnificent fountain with a vast basin. The central spout sprinkles the water to a height of ten fathoms. The abundance of water is amazing, and nothing can be more delightful than to see the jets fall in drops. Only to watch how it is lavished on



IN THE GARDEN OF THE GENERALIFE, GRANADA.

every side, and scattered and diffused through the air, is to enjoy the grateful freshness.

"In the highest part of this palace there is found within a garden a wide and lovely staircase, from whence one ascends to a landing where, from a neighbouring rock, comes all the mass of water distributed through the palace and grounds. The water is there enclosed by means of many cocks and keys, in such a manner that in whatever weather, in whatever way, and in whatever quantity desired, it can be turned on. The staircase is constructed with such art that in descending every step is wider than the one before, and in the centre of each step is a cavity where the running water can flow and remain. More than this, the stones forming the balustrades on either side of the staircase are hollowed above in the form of pipes or canals. Of these each has its cock above, so that the water can be made to flow at pleasure, either by the canals on the balustrades, or by the cavities in the wide staircase, or by both at once. The fall and impetus of the water can also, if desired, be increased so as to overflow the canals, bathing all the staircase and whoever is thereon. A thousand other jeux d'artifices can be played. In fact to me it seems that this site lacks nothing either of grace or beauty, and whoever understands how to enjoy and benefit from fair things, would live here in repose, solaced in the study and pleasure fitting to a noble mind, and knowing no other desire."

The fatalist's limiting of "desire," restless or ambitious, is not of our day, but the true sentiment of a garden is still and always must be one of repose, and in no gardens is this so gently conveyed as in those of the Moors. As the Italians have always expressed in their romance or profit; as the English garden emphasises the "love of retirement that triumphs over taste," and that of the French expresses the most exquisite and worldly elegance,—

" . . . un jardin de Lenôtre
Correct, ridicule, charmant,"

so the Moors mirrored in their pleasure grounds a peculiar sense of harmonious gaiety, a monotonously restful variety which shut the world completely away. The same dim sentiment is found in the gardens of Algiers, Morocco and Tunis, the wild tangles of jasmine and palm watered by simple irrigation—all that the Arab interprets for the word garden. But even there the rose blooms as the favourite flower, and wherever the rose's deep petals mark the passage of the torn heel of Venus flying to a wounded Adonis, the poetry of garden life, and of love and sweet perfume, is at home.

Can the designing and planting of gardens be entitled to rank among the fine arts properly so called? If art be a "corner of creation seen through a personality," it would seem difficult not to extend its scope to the perennial glories of a subtly conceived and happily executed garden. Who can deny the strongly personal element in some dainty horticultural work of the past, or resist the qualities they convey, now of "allegra," now of melancholy, again of breadth, of finesse or other attributes which we recognise as qualities of painting, sculpture and architecture. A mystic language this to him who can read, and who sees the genius of man expressing itself as perfectly in composition of box-tree and yew, or in the weaving of strange flower beds, as in groups of figures upon canvas or the frozen limbs of marble statuary. Form, colour, arrangement, all are here, but the palette glows with floral pigments, and the twisted tree trunks are nature's own sculpture. Such is the result, at least to the beholder, a vision of perfectly fulfilled art! But it would be difficult to say to what extent the result which seems so perfect and so expressive of one creative soul is in reality due to a single originative brain. Gardens, like constitutions, are not made, they grow; and in the case of these old gardens of Spain, it is but a playful labour to attempt to trace the various steps and changes through which most of them have



COURT OF LINDARAXA, THE ALHAMBRA.

passed. It would be difficult to determine what of their delicious beauty is due to the artificer and what to chance, the strength of nature, or the gentle hand of time ; and as before some old forgotten and mellowed painting we are enraptured, both by the power of the painter who has produced and the kindly touch of time which has embellished. At all events the fact remains that old gardens like old pictures are apt to be the most beautiful, explain it who may.

Of the Generalisé it would be difficult to say whether the pensive thread or the joyous is predominant. Perhaps its sympathetic charm reflects the humour of our own spirit, for a garden is profoundly human ; it meets us as we meet it, willing to

"Take hands and part with laughter,
Touch lips and part with tears."

It is precisely the sombre note of some corners of this exquisite haunt which brings into fuller relief the flowery vistas of other spots, the light musical ripple of the tinkling streams contrasting in an admirable chord of harmony with the sighing of the wind in the dark cypress spires, making a light poem of deftly felt contrast ; while the black shadows of the vaulted arches of yew trees form a sombre note of mystery against which stand out in laughing blaze of sunshine the clear-cut whiteness of arch and whitewashed wall. The laws of art are eternally the same in all its manifestations. As in the colour values of a rare piece of Japanese lacquer, one is enthralled by the nuance of artistic feeling which gives to tones, albeit beautiful in themselves, an interpretation which passes to quite another plane of æsthetic perception and unlocks the gate of dreams.

Were there space in so slight a chapter, it would be pleasant enough to follow the track of Moorish gardens across the Spanish frontier into Portugal. What Moorish influence is petrified there ! Every building over a century old seems to reflect something of its spirit as the people themselves still do

to-day ; a something not lightly caught but ingrained in the consciousness of the race. The Oriental interpretation of the Gothic, the strange medley of architectural styles, meet us in every old door and arch. And the gardens of Portugal—how the Moors must have revelled in a vegetation so rich and so Oriental ! Something of their Eastern spirit laid hold of Vathek's author, when he let his imagination run wild amidst palms and exotic perfumes, the tinkling of streams, the proud seclusion of his home. But in this quiet corner of the Generalife it is a far flight of fancy to think of that hanging wilderness smiling with its perpetual summer over the stern Moorish haunts of stone around. Such memories take us too far into another land,—

“ A land where all the men are stones,
And all the stones are men.”

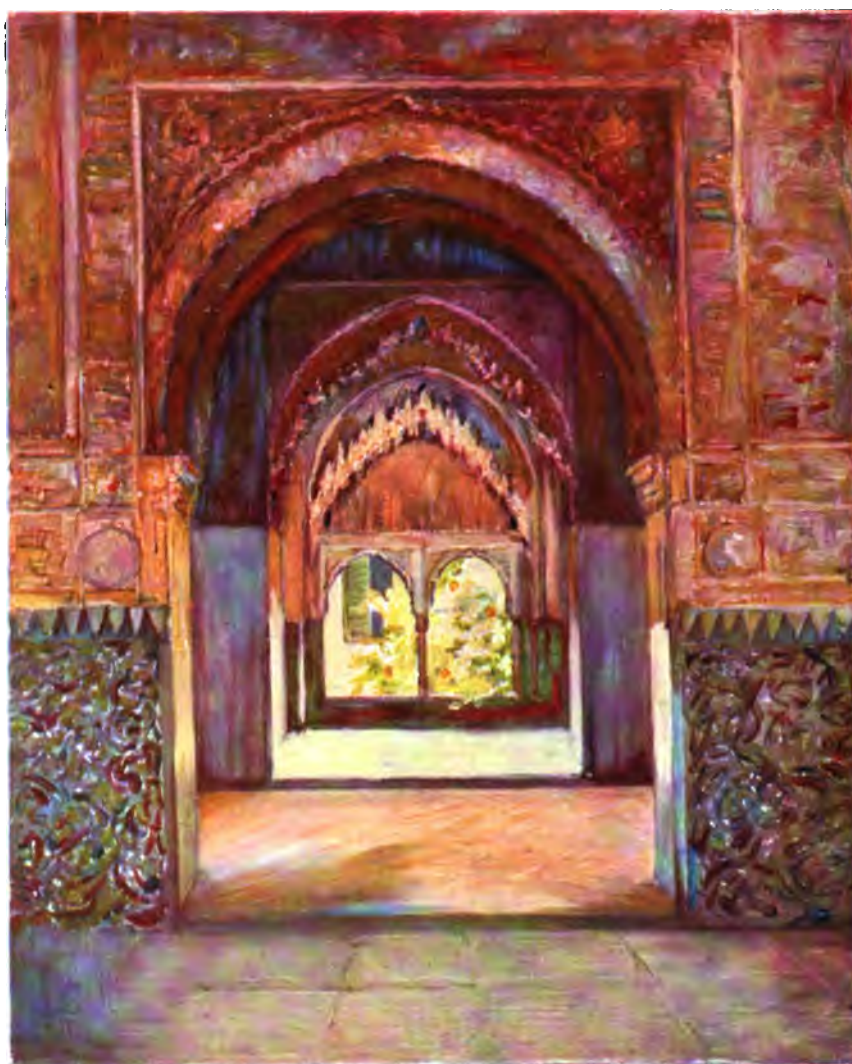
There is a cult, half genuine, half artificial, in our age for the study and story of old-time gardens. It has taken the wand of centuries to instil into bygone pleasaunce grounds the seductive melancholy that appeals to the poetry and art of to-day. He who surrenders himself to the charm of these Moorish haunts in Spain must be lover, not only of flowers, trees and fountains, but of paths from which some figure has strayed into the past never to return, of shadows flung by yesterday's happy sunshine. It is the poetry of a brilliant age which must haunt him now in spirit in these gardens abandoned but never sad.

“ No se hallan en la paleta los colores de la tristeza ; ”¹

But the colours that can breathe poetry are there. Poetic gardens of Spain ! They are a landmark in the artistic life—a beautiful inspiration.

“ Days in the garden, why are ye so few ? ”

¹ “ On the palette are found no colours of sadness.”



GATE OF THE TWO SISTERS, THE ALHAMBRA.

CHAPTER VI

Arabesque and Azulejo

"The function of ornament is to make you happy."—RUSKIN.

THERE is a veritable language in the ornamental tastes of nations, a happy language like the would-be words of music. This expression of a pleasure-loving, colour-influenced people inscribed in arabesque and artistic caligraphy on every Moorish wall has imparted an artificial sunshine to Spain, a curious link between the gloom of the Spaniard and the strong lights of the past. The enjoyment of life and beauty in the North and West has never expressed itself happily there in monuments. Italy herself, uniting the extremes of artistic fervour and gay *inconscience* has left nothing in building or ornament to laugh away the gloom of time. But with a faint irresponsible reflection of Greek joyfulness the "composite" Moors, lowly as well as cavalier, allowed for six centuries the sunshine of careless living to filter through their walls. It is something for recognition, and should be counted in their balance whenever this little understood people are assigned their precise niche among the civilisations of nations that have risen and passed away. For the psychological history of the Moors still remains to be written. Though their hold on Spain covered so many centuries the familiar terms of Moorish art and science and philosophy are still vague when we try to give them concrete form, as though we were but dealing with a shower of human sparks lit up for a while by splendid worlds that were passing away into space.

The ornamental spirit of Mauresque building in Spain, as far

as the purely native drift of taste and not culture counted, was not Arabian. The Arab was and is a creature of simple inclinations, while the Berber has ever shown himself influenced by display, a display which to-day vents itself in a passion for jewellery and bright garments. The Berber dynasties of Seville and Grenada encouraged the *luxe* of ornament till it reached the pinnacle of its possibilities, showing therein a distinct deviation from the more restrained ideals of Abd-ul-Rahman's day. It was a taste bound to reach excess and verge upon the disputed statement that "ornament cannot be overcharged when it is good, but is always overcharged when it is bad." That the Mauresque style was held in check for so long showed the preponderating influence of Persian and Oriental styles which held the secret of gorgeous display without the destroying element of barbarism.

Arabesque, mosaic, the use of architectural forms in a purely ornamental spirit—such as the adoption of the small pendentive arches of India—and azulejo work, are the characteristic features of Moorish decoration with which the bare structural shell was transformed into a web of delicate beauty. The Mohamedans of the Middle Ages were masters of the art of mural decoration, uniting and perfecting all the varied processes of ancient countries before passing them on westward in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Like some jeweller, master of his art, Moorish ingenuity set the gems of antiquity into a new and startling setting, hall-marking the fashions it favoured with its own name. "Tout ce qui s'est fait en pays Musulman n'est pas un fruit de l'Islam," but nevertheless all the arts borrowed and developed by the Mohamedans became personal through the bond of their faith, as well as by the law which permits new energy from old roots. Seizing hold of every known decorative art for their mural enrichment, the early weaving of native tapestry was transformed no less with the "Arabs" than with the Egyptians and Babylonians into a stone webwork which



ENTRANCE TO THE BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE, ALGIERS.

rivalled in mystery as well as in beauty the textile wealth of the palaces of Nineveh or Persia.

It is a matter of opinion whether form and ornament can be judged separately, but can there be any doubt as to the verdict on Oriental work? Its true spirit is colour, which uses form in the sense of design only, and the use of stucco which gave it so happy a field was understood in no debased way. Moorish stucco, a hard and consistent plaster of which the secret is lost, was laid on as is gesso on canvas, ready for the brush, and never did it lose its virtue of truth by imitation of stone.¹ Eastern races are now—a little late in the day—admitted to have a rare power over colour, and have proved that some of the highest forms of art can express themselves through it no less than through form. Like prose and poetry, form and colour overlap, can separate or combine. “If we set ourselves to discover,” says Ruskin, “in what races the human soul, taken all in all, reached its highest magnificence, we shall find, I believe, two great families of men, one of the East and South, the other of the West and North, the one including the Egyptians, Jews, Arabians and Persians. . . .” None of these races understand form in its completion of beauty as well as strength, yet they had mastered all the gorgeous subtleties of the rainbow.

Arabesque, a French term meaning “in the Arabian manner,” and vulgarised when the art penetrated into France during the Spanish wars of Louis XIV.’s reign, is the name now broadly associated with the ancient as well as Arabian fashion of richly decorating flat surfaces or low reliefs with—originality—textile imitations, whose origin dates far back to the hieroglyphic enrichment of Egyptian monuments. The term is now applied to any fanciful and grotesque decoration painted on flat surfaces, such as are found on the walls of Pompeii, in the designs of Claude Audran in the Louvre or in Rafaello’s Loggia. But this

¹ Ruskin.

cinquecento interpretation of old-time classical ornamentation is far more grotesque in inspiration than geometrical, and Raffaello's exquisitely "artistic pottage of nymphs, cupids and satyrs," as it has been called, has nothing in it of the true spirit of arabesque,

"Fine
With mysteries of inlaced design,
And shapes of shut significance,
To aught but an anointed glance—
The dreams and visions that grow plain
In darkened chambers of the brain."

Arabesque ornamentation, unfortunately, lends itself easily to be vulgarised, and the fact that it often appeals without previous culture to the ignorant, seems to rob it of a cult of electives; but the love of gorgeousness and display, of surface loveliness, to which it appeals—that rudely artistic feeling found in the most humble and ignorant of individuals—is not without its redeeming quality in an age when the primitive richness of colour has been overtone down, and we often fear to admire what seems too bright to have separated itself from some persuasive barbarism. Let the Moorish temples of ornamentation in Spain or Africa appeal to the mass or to the elect, let the Mauresque style overload the genuine arabesque, or the Alhambra ornamentation be "used as shopfronts to the no small detriment of Regent and Oxford Street," he who cares for the decorative spirit of a people who by no means always sought to impregnate their works of art with "soul," will find a delight in the humblest relics as well as in the most gorgeous *chefs-d'œuvre* of Spain and its mirrored art across the water.

With the Arabs, whose earliest employed artisans seem to have been Persian, the arabesque may have grown out of the introduction of mathematics into Persia by the Saracens, the development of caligraphy as a fine art, and the restrictions of the Koran. The arabesque is distinctly textile in spirit, and wherever

it flourished textile excellence existed also. The bright play of woven threads forms the basis of Arabian art wherever it spread or melted into other styles, and is the only characteristic which the architecture of the Arabs preserved intact in all those parts of the three continents conquered by the Mohamedans. Seated upon the backs of swaying dromedaries,

“Camels tufted o'er with Yemen's shells,
Shaking in every breeze their light-ton'd bells,”

the women, during the long journeys of the nomad tribes, spun the fine threads of camel or goat's wool, while during the noon-day and evening halts of the caravans they wove and embroidered carpets and garments with all the fantasy which is said to appear in the epic poems of the Arab story-tellers.¹

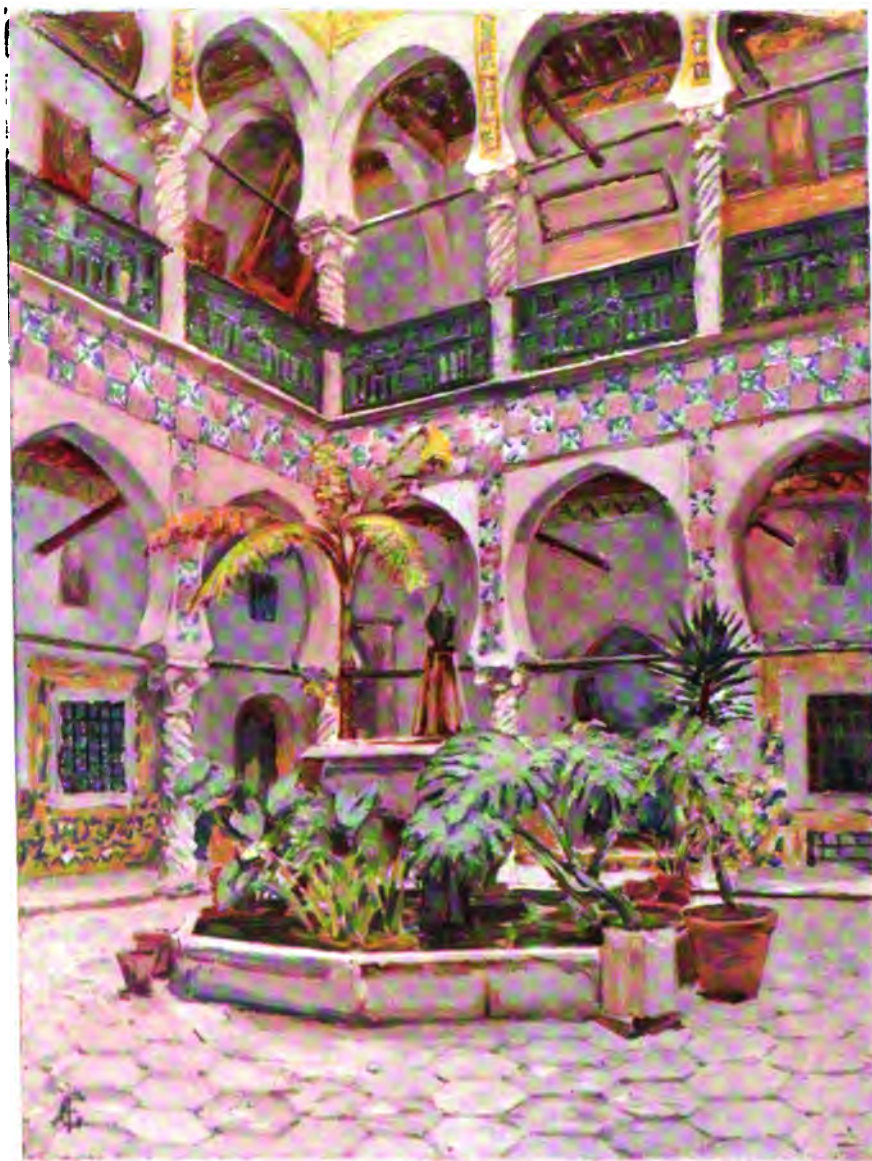
But it must be confessed that this native weaving of pre-Mohamedan days is largely gathered from conjecture. Neither story nor legend pictures for us an Arabian Helen or Penelope. No Homer of the Desert sang of the warlike deeds or graceful home arts of Arabia. Pliny himself is silent, and the sun-browned fingers that wove those vanished stuffs were guided by no motive of heroic figure or gallant act. But conjecture in this case is nevertheless almost proof. Weaving is probably older than any architectural system with every race of people. We see the high-warp loom represented in the caves of Beni-Hassan as we see it to-day but little changed at the Gobelins. We read of the early monuments of Bible times hung with rich hangings, and the otherwise rude walls of Assyrian buildings preserve in solid stone or stucco the legend of a vanished but perfected tapestry. All the designs and architectural imitations of textiles of the great past embody the same tendencies as the Oriental hangings of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as well as of the best Eastern work of our day. And it would be strange if the

¹ Reber.

Arabs, even in their wandering existence, had reached no pitch of excellence in their own weaving. The tapestry of the ancient Egyptians, limited though it was to threads of cotton or linen, through which it never reached a first importance, as with other countries in their use of silk, must, as time went on, have been as familiar to the Arabian merchants as was the weaving of the Syrians or the Indo-influenced tapestries of Persia. But whatever foreign styles affected the industry of the Arab, it must have possessed a very marked character of its own. From the absence of any *authentic* command in the Koran against the introduction into arts of the living forms of nature, we may gather that this only art of the Arabian desert was as free then as afterwards of human or animal forms, and may even at that date have displayed the ground-work for its geometrical after-excellence.

It is curious to think that an apparently narrowing misinterpretation of the Koran really developed the only feature of Arabian art distinctly pure in its origin, however composite in its growth. For had the Arabs trodden the beaten path of art, endeavouring to build up a school of painting or sculpture of their own, their inartistic *fond* would have been laid bare. The branches of civilisation in which the Mohamedan people excelled, such as those of decorative architecture, enlightened literature, and even science, were all capable of expanding from the old and inexhaustible fountains they had stirred anew, but the gifts of painting and the plastic arts are gifts too inspired to flourish without the sunshine of natural genius.

Is it the absence of this divine genius which lies like a barrier between the arts of the Moors of Spain and those of western nations? Many must confess to a secret confusion of impressions when within the setting of Moorish ornamentation. A something in human nature too often starved is over satiated here, but something still more life-giving is absent. In the midst of marble and hidden wood, glazed tiles and tinted stucco, which



COURTYARD OF THE BIBLIOTHEQUE NATIONALE, ALGIERS.

repeat exquisitely and untiringly the patterns of those textiles familiar from earliest times to the Arabs, we are surrounded by a perishable beauty which accident, not genius, has crystallised. Nothing is real—arch or vault—yet all is fair,

“ . . . the enamelled cupola which towers
All rich with arabesque of gold and flowers ;
And the mosaic floor beneath shines thro’
The sprinkling of that fountain’s silv’ry dew,
Like the wet glistening shells of ev’ry dye
That on the margin of the Red Sea lie.”

The arches are fringed curtains or trefoil leaves, the structural character is lost, the pillars seem to tremble with their own slenderness. All is fantastic as a dream. So must it be enjoyed, for it belongs not to our world of energy and stone.

Arabesque or Damaskeen work was originally carried out by Persian artisans employed to decorate the mosque at Damascus, and was doubtless in their case the effort to display architecturally the varied and brilliantly-coloured designs of their own textiles, those marvellous carpets of Persia on which gardens or “paradises” were depicted, on which fruit and flowers often interlaced with the graceful forms of antelope or bird, lay embroidered in all the colours of nature. In spite of their early destruction of artistic objects, the Arabs showed their taste for these carpets, adapting them to their own dwellings as mural decorations or as carpets for their mosques. The faithful Moslem took pride in possessing rich stuffs worthy of kneeling upon in prayer with the head bowed towards Mecca. But in accordance with the supposed teachings of the Koran and with their growing horror of idolatry, the inventive genius of the Persian workman, often accustomed from even the humblest to work out his own design, must have been severely checked. Whatever license penetrated with time into the private palaces, the command to create nothing that cast a shadow was certainly very generally followed, as much

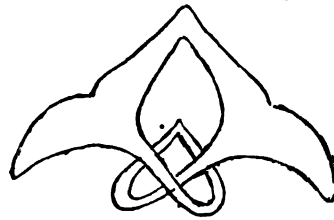
from inclination as from religious obedience, and this primitive inclination tended to develop to an extraordinary degree the decorative forms borrowed from geometry, reducing even the free tendrils of flowers and the curves of leaves to geometrical laws. This combination of natural and geometrical design is seen to perfection in Spain, Sicily and Persia.

It would be difficult to precise when and where elementary geometry was first applied to decorative work. In the paintings and sculptures of some of the oldest monuments of Egypt may be traced geometrical curves and designs of a primitive kind, and in Syria and Asia Minor, it existed in Christian buildings long before the Arab invasions, and long before Mohamedan art had converted this form of ornamentation into distinct styles. Nothing can be imagined more effective than the arabesque combination of severe and mystic lines and laughing colours. They climb up to the very ceiling, here and there circling the capitals above the slender columns twisted round and round with sculptured rope. The weaving of verses or lines from the Koran and elsewhere into the wall design was a custom also gathered from textiles, and adapted with the other features of tapestry. Among the Moorish kings the splendour of sovereignty was enhanced by the weaving in gold or coloured thread of name and kingly inscription into the texture of the royal "tiraz" or robe which Abd-ul-Rahman introduced into Spain—a custom which lasted as long as the Moors held the country.

So the fashion of wall decoration in imitation of hanging textiles is one of the oldest to be traced in architecture. Lessing, the great Orientalist, says: "The alabaster reliefs, formerly coloured, which cover every part of the palace of Nineveh, are imitations of the magnificent embroideries of Babylon."

If, restricted to the interlacings of inscriptions and a continual repetition of the same fantasies, not only by religious scruples but by incapacity for producing natural forms, there should

occur a strange monotony throughout Moorish interiors, it is through this very monotony that a delightful sense of calm is conveyed ; a distinct charm from the very use of the mould which the great age of the Gothic has taught us rightly or wrongly to despise. But where the Gothic worker had the whole range of Nature from which to shape his imagery, the Mohamedan artisan had nought but the intricate interlacings of the mind, and his hand was held in check by bonds of which we can hardly realise the severity. It is therefore doubly interesting when, in wandering through the courts of the Alhambra, we notice a budding leafage on the walls struggling to throw off the geometrical laws which bound fruit and flower as well as conventional forms. The intricate designs of the Persian lozenge, the triangle and semicircle, seem gradually to have formed themselves from the careless stalks of flowers, and here and there the growth of unstiffening leaves indicates a half unconscious leaning towards the inspiration of Nature—a leafage of spring which never reached summer growth.



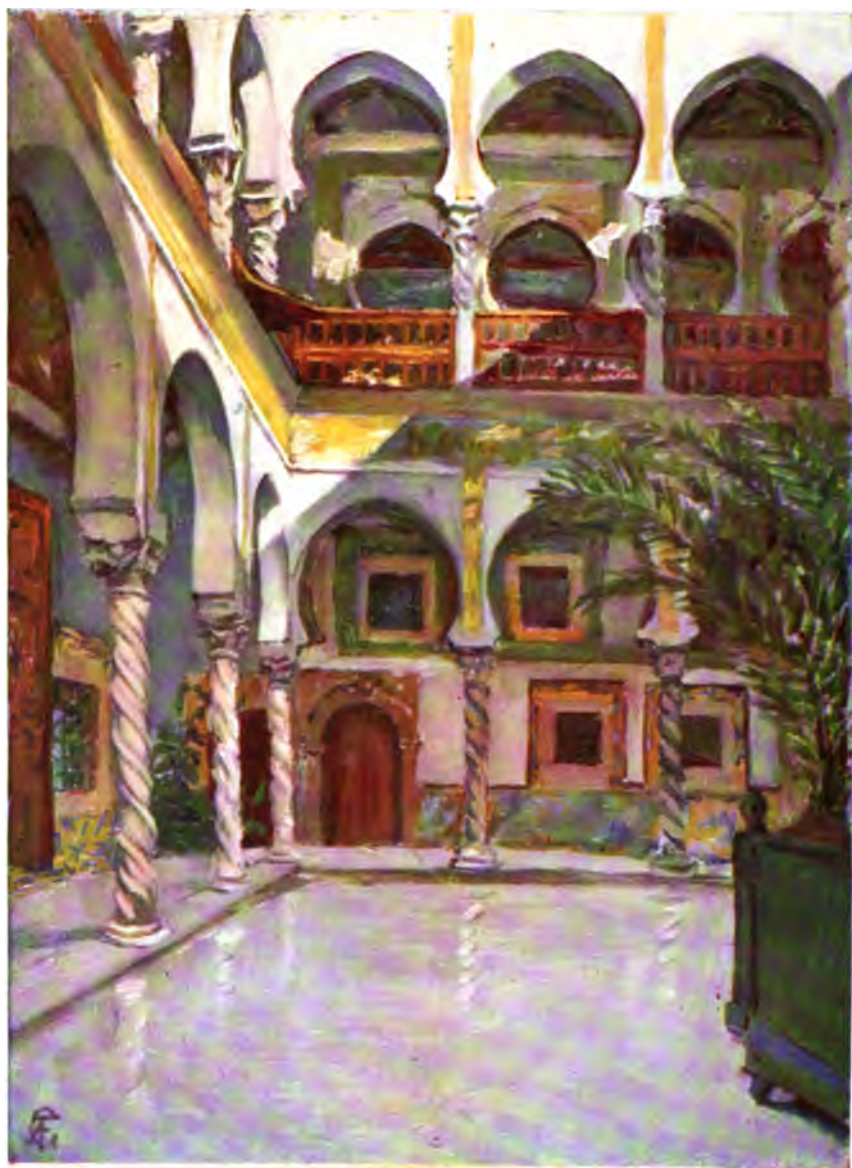
DESIGN FROM WALLS OF THE
ALHAMBRA.

The importance of the arabesque in decoration was early shared by the use of tiles which the Arabs introduced into Spain. The art of wall decoration with glazed tiles is so old and so natural a development from the use of sun-dried bricks, that even in primitive Arabia it must have been known, as it was so many centuries earlier, in Egypt. The earliest kind made in Spain is composed of a mosaic of tiny pieces let into the plaster of the wall, much after the style of an old Roman pavement, and exhibiting, like the arabesque, an infinity of geometrical designs. Wherever the Arabs conquered, whether in Syria, Mesopotamia, or Egypt, they found this mosaic work had flourished, and one of its happiest homes seems to have been Persia. The earliest

workers in the art employed by the Moors probably came from Byzantium ; but so laborious and costly a form of workmanship was soon replaced by the use of larger tiles in pure colours, and of extraordinary resistance. One class of wall tile, or azulejo, manufactured in Spain during the fourteenth century, continued for long to suggest or imitate mosaic. The oldest of these glazed tiles may be seen in the Alhambra, and show an infinite variety of imagination, though they do not equal in brilliance the green, black and azure blue faïence of the Cuarto Real.

Fortuny, during the years he worked at Granada, delighted in this tile work of the Alhambra, and himself endeavoured to reproduce the "*reflet métallique*," with some happy results. He had the idea, as time wore on, of painting on faïence, but his busy and too short life gave him no chance of carrying out his intention. Since his time another artist, the fantastic and symbol-loving Rochegrosse, has ornamented his Moorish home in Algiers with strange dim-coloured azulejos of his own design.

In most Oriental countries tiles for mural decoration were used in the most magnificent way throughout the Middle Ages. From the twelfth to the sixteenth century an especial kind of lustred tile was largely employed for friezes, being frequently made in large slabs and modelled boldly in relief. Later on, when Italian arts penetrated into Spain, two schools of pottery were formed, one traditional in its pure strong colours and geometrical patterns, the other displaying all the characteristics of the Renaissance ; tiles of a coarse majolica showing the graduated tinting and freer design, and the combination of blues and yellows which are found in all later Hispano-Moorish works. These were probably the work of Italian potters settled in Spain, and were used as freely for paving as for mural decorations. Splendid specimens are found in the Alcazar at Seville, where the very gardens are bright with the tiles of the seventeenth century, and even earlier designs pave the sunny pavilion. Intruding among these



THE ARCHÊVECHÉ, ALGIERS.

paving tiles of Carlo Quinto's day may be seen the tiny imitation of the old style of mosaic in the little maze in black and white, itself no larger than an azulejo.

It would be difficult to overrate the influence of this tile work on Moorish architecture, so beautifying is it and so harmonious with the contrasting whitewash of the walls. It greets us from every mosque and minaret along the coast of Africa, gleaming, as in the mosque of Tangier, with the brilliant sacred green of Islam, the "colour of the dawn." The colour green plays a great part in Mohamedan decoration, and its sacred character is as old as Egyptian story, when the special vesture of Knmu, the moulder or fashioner of men, was depicted in green upon the walls of Philae.

Lustred wall tiles, which must have influenced the Moorish style, were employed by the Persians in the ornamentation of their buildings from a very early date, and their mural faïence is among the oldest of the remains that have come down to us from the early days of Islam. Long after the advent of the new religion the Persians refrained from representing in their work any human form or even floral design, but their artistic sense got the better of their scruples, and by the sixteenth century unlustred tiles of floral and animal design were freely used, and are still to the present day. The large vase and bouquet of flowers extending its design over a large number of tiles is found over and over again in all later buildings of the Moors, especially in Algeria, where, however, the Moors of the eighteenth century showed their growing indifference and ignorance of the use of mural decoration by carelessly fitting the wrong tiles together, or—as in the beautiful Archevêché of Algiers—by turning them completely upside down. It would have been interesting to trace whether the Moors of Spain, who were gradually adopting so many of the customs of the Christians, would not, in time, have developed more latitude in the designs and subjects of their

mural arts. But their expulsion arrested what might have been metamorphoses. The arts that they carried with them to Africa retrograded, though whatever civilisation the Moors of Africa acquired was owing to the Moors of Spain.

To turn from the brilliant period of Mauresque decoration to this much later period which the Moors vaguely continued in Algeria, carrying on the outcome of African rather than Arab styles, it would be difficult to find a more interesting example of late tile work and Moorish fantasy than in the Bardo of Algiers. Here in the low-roofed chambers, bright with the revetment of coloured azulejos, which replaced in this country the more elaborate arabesque, may be seen the exact representation of an eighteenth-century Arab interior, furnished with the bright carpets and rugs, the low "suffahs," from which our own sofa is derived, the octagonal tables and the familiar coffee tray of every Moorish interior. Here and there, too, stands the large and indispensable "coffre" of painted wood—that most nomad of household articles—completing the list of furniture. This was the dwelling of a rich Arab who sighed within his walls of Persian blue and Italian tiles for the tent hangings of the desert, till came the day when, overburdened with nostalgia, he locked up his charming home; closed the latticed windows of the harem which looked down upon fountain and papyrus in the whitewashed patio, upon the magenta Bougainvillea and the tiled pavement; hung the keys to his belt, mounted his Arab steed and departed inland with his followers. On the way he met a foreign acquaintance who accosted him with questions as to the fate of his town home, learnt that it was to be sold, consented to pay the round sum asked, and took immediate possession of it. The Arab continued his way to the tent life of the desert, the patch of ancestral sand in which he, like his forefathers, longed once more to bury his wealth, untroubled by the fever of town life and its eternally restless spirit. He, too, like his forefathers, loved the

“nursery of the world, but not the school.” Arabs are justly termed children of the desert. “*Tout vieux qu'ils soient comme peuple, ce sont de grands enfants.*”

Though Algeria possesses nothing belonging to the best period of Moorish art, there are a number of villas reflecting the old decorative tastes of the Moors who had emigrated from Spain, which have survived by some miracle the iconoclasm of our civilisation. Among them may be named the Bardo, the Bibliothèque and Archevêché in the town, both genuine Moorish dwellings; the Villa Mufti, and others upon which new wings have been grafted. It is true that Algiers itself never attracted the Arabs from the interior, owing to its liability to earthquakes,



PAPYRUS IN THE COURT OF THE BARDO, ALGIERS.

while the internal disturbances between Berbers and emigrants afforded no opening for the arts; but during Turkish rule the city was far too important not to absorb an enormous amount of wealth.

Those interested in the Mauresque style of decoration and building in Spain will certainly not regret visiting the older dwellings here, though he must do so without the aid of guide-book or data of any kind, since the field of seventeenth and eighteenth century buildings of Algeria has been totally neglected for the by no means profoundly interesting Roman remains of the country, in which the French archæologists are still absorbed.

The origin of the Moorish decoration of doors with large nails is difficult to trace. Nails were driven into doors by the Romans for good luck, and the tradition may have been absorbed by the Arabs, but the arrangement of the half orange nails in regular patterns seems to be purely Mohamedan in origin. We



WINDOW AT VALENCIA.

read of the twenty-four portals of Cordova which were studded with Andalusian brass, and in the old time-eaten doors of the mosque of Sidi Okba, near Biskra, are geometrical designs in rough nails. Those on the doors of the Alhambra are famous for their solid beauty. It is a fashion which has never died out, and still we see the doors of Toledo and other parts of Spain

richly decorated with nails, rose-shaped or "media naranga" in form. Many of these later-day nails, dating from the fifteenth century, may perhaps have been the work of gipsies, who about that time began to develop in Spain their special taste in iron work. But if we know little of the precise origin of nailed doors, the exquisite lacework of the latticed windows tells its own tale of the secluded life of the harem, of the days when

"Through the silken network, glancing eyes
From time to time, like sudden gleams that glow
Through autumn clouds, shone o'er the pomp below."



COURTYARD OF THE BARDO, ALGIERS.

Valencia is a very home of these delightfully decorative windows, which lingered, no doubt, in various parts of Spain with the close seclusion of women. The Infanta of Spain might not show her face in the seventeenth century any more than the Sultanas of Granada in the fifteenth. And to this day Spanish girls of the lower classes, duenna-less and no longer enthralled as of old with the serenade which has been attributed in its origin to the Moors themselves, still smile through the bars or lattices with slowly flashing eyes, preferring to hear their lovers' whispers through this old-time barrier than face to face. Nevertheless, in talking of those lingering Moorish windows, beneath which guitars no longer pause, and which seem, in the freedom of our day, so prison-like, remembrance comes to me of a single Spanish love-verse, not unfit to rise, as I heard it do, through summer air and pass through those idle barriers,—

“ Cuando voy a la casa
De mi quéréda,
Se me hace cuesta abajo
La cuesta arriba,
Y cuando salgo
(De mi quéréda)
Se me hace cuesta arriba
La cuesta abajo.”¹

¹ “ When I go to the home
Of my love,
I seem to speed down hill
Though the path leads above ;
But when I turn from her home
(The home of my love),
Again is the path a hill
That leads not above.”

CHAPTER VII

Women of Spain and their Traditions

"Well, to be sure, madam, you was born to be a saint . . . and there is no resisting one's vocation. You will end in a convent at last."

—*The Castle of Otranto.*

THERE is no denying that however familiar Spain and the life thereof has now become to the world in general, one feature at least remains elusive and shrouded in a comparative mystery—the psychology and influence of Spanish women, past and present. Whatever divergencies, social or otherwise, separate the Spain of to-day from that of yesterday, in one thing history unites them, in the obscure *rôle* women have played in their country's intellectual and political story, and the immense influence exercised by religious communities on their own lives. Mediæval or Renaissant, the convent is on every side; in Barcelona, Alcala, Avila, Toledo, Agreda or Seville, all are haunted with mystic names. But convent life in Spain no longer displays its old activity; the cloistered nun has sunk to the level of a type, and her erewhile inspiration is exhausted. "J'ai été la rose, dit le parfum, Je vous ai aimés, dit le cadavre. Je vous ai civilisés, dit le couvent. A cela une seule réponse; Jadis."¹ And it is to that long ago that those who would analyse the Spanish woman to-day must turn, since in spite of every change and every new ambition, in spite of the curious vitality that underlies the superficial life and literature of the country, the patriotism of the past still holds its thrall over hearts and minds alike.

Spanish women travel but little, intermarry but rarely with

¹ *Les Misérables.* Victor Hugo.

foreigners ; know no longer the restless ambitions which at various periods in the past stirred their sisters so deeply if often so vainly. There are few liberal ideas that find a practice in their country, no interest in politics, no woman's movement worthy of the name, in spite of the encouragement of such an example as Madame Emilia Pardo Bazan, and a large number of nineteenth-century writers on social and educational problems, among whom Doña Concepción Arenal stands out as a veritable beacon of beneficent light. Born in 1820, her first work in 1860 attracted unusual attention. The reform of prisons, the raising of the moral standard among criminals, were the objects to which she devoted an arduous life, and many of her works thereon have been translated into various languages. "Such women," says her biographer, Pedro Dorado, "are rare all the world over, but in Spain they have been so rare, easy is it to count them upon the fingers." Modesty, too, claimed itself as one of her virtues, and when informed that a statue was to be raised to her name,— "Statues," was her answer, "are only raised to savants, martyrs or heroes, and I am none of these."

But though this popular social reformer achieved a practical success in her writings, the world of literature—that natural mirror of the progress of events in feminine ideas—is practically paralysed in Spain. No matter what value a work may possess, the public greets it with an absolute indifference. No criticism is vouchsafed it other than passing comments in second-rate journals. Last, and not least, nothing is earned by the writer, man or woman. The famous novelist, Valera, has calculated that his most celebrated work of fiction, *Pepita Jiménez*, has brought him in less than would purchase a ball-dress for his wife. Madame Pardo Bazan herself, the most popular feminine writer of the day, earns "de quoi vivre" through her immense journalistic labour rather than through her important works, while those works themselves often only cover their expenses by



A STREET IN ALMERIA.

a personal supervision of their sale, since the Spanish bookseller is rather disturbed than otherwise by the parting with his goods. If her *Life of St Francis of Assisi* sold well, her projected work on Cæsar Borgia had to be abandoned on account of the additional expense in the preparation of such a publication.¹ In fact, the public will only buy the cheapest form of volume, and the bookshops are stocked with small one-peseta volumes and absurdly miniature editions. We hear so much of the wonderful advance made in Spain during the last fifteen or twenty years, both in culture and enlightenment, that reading between the lines of the representative novels of the day, it is natural enough to search for the big ideas, the hopeful suggestion of unrest. A certain amount of unrest and even discontent is there, but woe to him who would keep the illusion if he wanders through the bookshops of Madrid, turns over the pages of the leading magazines (if he is fortunate enough to find any), examines the preposterous amount of badly translated foreign work; who sees on the stage every trifling novelty applauded into a transitory fame, while the works of dramatic writers of a higher standard struggle with the dust of indifference which collects inch-deep on all works of merit. Impossible as it is to live by the pen, save in pandering to the most frivolous side of dramatic art, or unless swayed by personal ambition, as were certain writers of Queen Isabella's day; thwarted by the indolent press and the indifference of the public to read, no wonder that the literary life of Spain is encompassed within narrow limits, and the names of women writers are few. What lacks in the Spain of to-day, says a French critic,² is neither the vein of originality or those capable of working it, but the critic and above all the public. In Spain criticism, which has reached such an exhausting excellence in other

¹ *La Renaissance Latine*, Nov. 1904.

² *Propos d'Espagne*. E. Martinenche.

countries, seems to be reserving its forces for a future in which more than half the inhabitants will be able to read, and the Budget of Public Instruction shall have given them the wherewithal to do so.

Be it but a "parrot's cry," the women of Spain seem still familiar to us only as types. With the songs of the French poets in our ears, we find in Andalusia only the typical woman to whom they sang. Andalusians "*a l'œil lutin*," pale with a warm and lovely pallor, fascinating, unintelligent, with the undulating walk of their country, the small hands and feet for which they are justly renowned, the harsh voice which grates cruelly over their exquisite "language of love," and always a certain nameless but coarse charm even when beauty itself is quite absent. The most enthusiastic of writers on the life and women of Andalusia, Madame Fernan Caballero, herself insists on this familiar type, giving it nothing new, only the eternal picturesque, the inexhaustible fervour of Oriental natures. But familiarity with a country's types is only of interest when those types show up the individuality they can produce in their midst, the talents and powers of those who separate themselves from the mass, not merely the typical beauty to which the praises of a Byron or a de Musset were given, a beauty as material as it is often striking.

Touching the question of personal endowments of Spanish women, Howell writes in the seventeenth century : "Nature hath made a more visible distinction 'twixt the two sexes here than elsewhere ; for the men are for the most part swarthy and rough, but the women are of a far finer mould ; they are commonly little, and whereas there is a saying that makes a complete woman, 'Let her be English to the neck, French to the waist, and Dutch below,' I may add for hands and feet let her be Spanish, for they have the least of any.' Eyes and hair are their chief beauties, and the ringlets of Eleanor of Castile defied, it is said, the tight cambric helmet which the fashion of her day

ordained. But Spanish beauty, as we understand it in its most poetical sense, is rare—perhaps always was so—in spite of the Mission of Beauty which played its important part in the Spain of the Renaissance no less than in Italy. The very air in those days was still charged with the fantastic luxury of Moorish harem life, and the Oriental interpretation of æsthetics, but the type most admired at that period showed a curious divergence from what might have been expected as the natural outcome of a luxurious and sensual age, reflecting strongly the violent transformation of the people's tastes and ideals, the same ecstatic fervour which was finding expression in their religious feeling. For long the style of beauty most admired though most opposed to that natural to the women of the country, consisted of "a face of aristocratic

oval, a swan neck, a wasp waist ; in short, a general effect of reed-like slighthness and fragility, a veritable mantel ornament, so delicately balanced that to touch it was more than one dared, and then puzzled how so frail a thing could manage to stand on such tiny feet, to hold out such a poor little hand"—a virginal figure of youth, an absurdly pure type, which for long persisted in Spain side by side with the more sensual beauty which Italy favoured. But with time Spain reverted to her natural tastes, and the full-blown rather than the slender damsel was reinstated in favour, "women full and big-lipped, which is



A GIRL OF SEVILLE.

held a great beauty rather than a blemish, it being a thing incident to most of the race." ¹

However pure the former type of womanhood may have seemed to the exalted eyes of that time, there was something profoundly unhealthy in the development of Spanish women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Mysticism became to them as the breath of life. The very colours chosen for their garments, and which influenced the gay fashions of France, became mysterious and sickly, and their names still fill one with dismay. "Couleur d'Espagnol mourant, d'Espagnol malade, Péché mortel, Triste amie, Face grattée," such hues stand out with alarming *tristesse* from the healthier rainbow of "cramoisi, couloubin, et aurore," and bear their witness to the weird changes through which the Spanish psychology was passing. In spite of the simple and unsensational life inculcated by Anne of France and propounded in Spain, in spite of the "perpetual fast" of the Christian life which Vivés encouraged as a *régime* to combat the flames of the heart, violent emotions continued to be played upon, hearts were lost in the nursery, religious vows taken before a child had ceased to play, women of twenty-five looked as old as women of fifty in England. One may wonder how the ladies of that time could ever care for so pure a pleasure as the gathering of May dew, or how an English prince in search of a bride had ever such good fortune as to discover an Infanta in so unemotional a pastime.

With the uniting of Castile and Aragon and the violent religious fanaticism which bound these two naturally antagonistic divisions of one country together, the people of Spain, men and women alike, had passed as it were,—

"From lethargy to fever of the heart,"

a fever which in their country scorches rather than warms, stimulates rather than feeds. Intellectuals as well as hearts were

¹ Howell.

affected by this fire. It produced enthusiastic students rather than philosophers. Women of a new type seemed born, unable to satisfy their eager lives with simple food, searching with avidity for new truths and finding nothing but old, and drawn, as though worn out with the struggle, towards the cloister, "*le lieu étrange d'ou l'on aperçoit, comme d'une haute montagne, d'un côté l'abîme où nous sommes, de l'autre l'abîme où nous serons.*" This seemed the end of every effort, of the active and exemplary life, of the ambitions of youth, of the adventurous and most thoughtless sinner. Immorality itself seemed exalted by the violence with which it was swayed, wavering with strange yearnings between the temptations of the Devil and the passionate voice of Religion. Often both seemed to go hand in hand, both sworn foes yet inseparable, both torn with human and spiritual emotions. Men and women alike were living volcanoes, and even to-day, from end to end of Spain, those volcanoes are still around us, only seemingly extinct beneath a lava of indifference, of freethought and modernity.

The emotional life was bound to go hand in hand with this religious fervour. It marked the barrier between the old days of rude and simple chivalry and the new life of passionate ecstasy which, after inspiring the entire Spanish nation, gradually paralysed both sexes, till the words of a poet of the day sang to the gulf that now lay between them :—

"Where are the brilliant knights and the many fantastic inventions of their day? The jousts, the tournaments, the trappings of the horses, the embroideries, what are they now but illusions? What are they but as a vision of green pastures in mid-air ?

"Where are you, brilliant women, with your head-dresses, your exquisite robes, your bewildering perfumes? Where are those flames you once lit in the hearts of your followers? All the songs of the troubadours and the tunes that echoed the

tender words? All the dances and the stuffs that entranced with their glamour?"

The exaggerated wording of the Arab poets themselves had crept into the style of the Spanish writers. Flowery descriptions and gorgeous display were features no less of the Spaniards than of the Moors of Spain, but if the same exaggeration was reached by the ladies of the Spanish court as that which characterised their sisters of the harems, there was about it something less natural to their gloom of race. Writing of the luxury of his countrywomen's dress, the historian, Ibn ul-Khatib, condemns it as a madness. He describes the lavish use of perfumes, the folly of the women, especially those of rank, in decorating themselves with hyacinths, chrysolites, emeralds, and other stones and ornaments of gold; till such was the variegated splendour of their appearance when in the mosques, that they have been likened to the flowers of spring in a beautiful garden. No doubt such language points to a luxurious and effete style of life and an Oriental standard for women, but the place taken by beauty and luxury amidst an Oriental people does not indicate the decadence which it might do in a western nation. The effeteness of Moorish Granada is often quoted as instrumental to its fall, yet, perhaps, its degree of extravagance did not surpass that of Cordova or of the Abbasside capitals. The lavish wealth of harem and chivalric life in Spain in those days went hand in hand with a brilliant period in the intellectual history of Arab women. Female seclusion introduced during the reign of Walid II., continued to allow of extraordinary freedom in their lives, and Cordova was a city of female students and intellectual leaders of *salons*, as well as a city of poetesses, and fathers were often proud to bear as surname the title of some gifted daughter. In those elastic days the very slaves of the king were poets and scholars, while even a freedwoman, unaided by rank which counted so much among the Arabs, could write



ALGECIRAS.

her works of rhetoric and expound her theories. A circle of brilliant women, Aixa, Hafsa, Hinda "la jogleuse," all wrote their polished verse. Walladéh, unmarried and living to a great age, excelled them all with her poetry, her reunions, her patronage of literature and art, while the historians of her day filled their works with anecdotes of her beauty and talent. Princesses and ladies of rank gave musical *soirées*, joined in the gay movement of social life, tried their skill in such games as tennis and rackets, practised archery, and only when too large a number of professionals had deteriorated the graceful art of dancing, was that amusement confined to certain classes, and the pretty Moorish dance, the Zambra, was laid aside by the ladies of the royal harems.

After the fall of Cordova, in the midst of the great turmoil of the eleventh century, when the social and political fabric of Western Asia was almost falling apart, women continued to be the object of chivalric attention, and the Mohamedan capitals out of, as well as in Spain, counted many a scholastic woman in their midst: lawyers, expounders of the Koran, musicians and Latin poets. Again, in Granada, chivalry of every kind found a congenial home, and as in the capitals of the Caliphs, women occupied a prominent position, mingling in the society of men and assisting at the *fêtes* and tourneys in which all the mediæval world, Christian or Moor, revelled. Able as they were to take their share in the thought of the day and to hold their own in whatever branch of culture they chose to pursue, though always without the faintest *réclame*, no doubt such women, as witty as they were handsome, had an ennobling influence on the gallantry and chivalry for which Granada was so famous. If little more than "the shadow on the grass" seems to remain of this Moorish dream of fair women, we must remember that it is contrary to Oriental pride to give publicity to those they may cover with praise. The women of the Moorish age in Spain were, probably, unambitious, had little stimulus from the great world, but if they

sought the intellectual life from the midst of their secluded courts of love, it showed, not only that their minds had an intellectual drift, but that the men of that time found a charm in the companionship of educated wives, and must have encouraged it.

Such, then, were the women who, even from the far-off seclusion of Granada and athwart the natural barriers of race and religion, must have influenced those of Spain in countless ways and for long to come. But with the last exodus of Moorish life from the country, that influence became for a time lost sight of. With the new impulse of the Catholic sovereigns, the feminine life of Spain underwent a radical change. The influences of the Andalusian Moors, the still deeper effects of the Jewish race, were combated with a sudden mad determination ; a new direction was taken by all, a new type developed, and until such characters as those of Saint Theresa, of Maria de Agreda or of Aloysia Segia, have been studied, the emotional story of Spanish women can be but imperfectly understood, nor can we account for the obscure and strangely impalpable part played in history by characters so endowed and so powerful. Typical types these of a strange, conventual age—mystically intellectual saint, mysteriously self-deluded and deluding nun, and woman of the world, whose life of "savant" seemed ever drawn towards its missed vocation till, spiritually if not practically, convent walls encompassed her. The nun, Maria Coronèla, born in the little river town of Agreda, if not intellectual, had strange powers. After ecstatic revelations she and her entire family of parents, sisters and brother embraced the religious life ; but if all were probably of weak and impressionable intellect, this nun must have possessed in a developed degree all the ecstatic qualities of her age. Strange was the influence she acquired over the mind of her reserved and unhappy monarch, and stranger still, for a woman of her country, was the intriguing interest she displayed in politics. For long after her death the trial as to the sincerity of her inspiration in

her sordid *Life of the Virgin Mary* continued to rage, but though time has told against her memory, the word "impostor" seems out of place for such a woman in such an age. Who could venture to say in those centuries, "That vision was never seen, such a stigma never worn?" The women of Spain have fed on those visions ever since. Even in our day a character so modern as that of Fernan Caballero can hardly be understood as a writer save through the mystic influence of those who have so typified the psychology of their kind that a popular and narrow novelist of the times is but an echo of that passionate past, the worn reflection of its great characters. Even the unbalanced and unprincipled Sister Patrocinio of the reign of Isabella II. becomes a feeble echo of the wonderful personalities of women who, in any country and in any age, would have stood out as remarkable.

But of the women who, resisting for a while at least, the call of the cloistered life, wrote and studied and composed with such masculine ambition in an age of avidity for all learning, of those who wore crown or laurel wreath—what do we know? Little more than the merest echo of their lives have come down to us, from the days of Isabella to those of the Empress Eugenie. Impossible to turn to France without a haunting vision of names made famous by right of brilliant gifts, of wit, of social power, of tragic fate; or who, with some scandalous notoriety, yet managed to reflect with it the very atmosphere and taste and glamour of their age. Impossible to wander through Italy unaccompanied by the Poets' Muses, by some mysterious Lucrezia Borgia, some tragic Cenci, some female fiend or political *intrigante*. But in Spain the women of the past hide behind ghostly veils. In spite of their proud vitality they have come down to posterity without the pulse of life. They shone in no brilliant *salons*. There have been no Jeanne d'Arcs to wave on high a patriotic banner; no Madame de Pompadour to throw a halo of art and letters over a corrupt court; no Madame d'Aulnoy to

write shrewdly of what can catch only the woman's eye and mind ; no Lebrun or Angelica Kauffmann, unless we liken to them the obscure Maria de Ararca, the contemporary of Velasquez and Rubens, both of whom admired her work. "Doña Maria de Mendoza, the pretty Isobel of Cordova, far richer in Latin, Greek and Hebrew than in worldly possessions ; Catherine Ribera, the bard of love and faith ; the two professors of rhetoric at the Universities of Salamanca and Alcala ; Beatrice of Galindo who taught the Queen Latin ; Isabella Rosera, who preached in Toledo Cathedral and went to Rome to convert the Jews and to comment on Scotus Erigena before an array of dumbfounded cardinals ; Aloysia Sygea, again, the most illustrious of them all, an infant prodigy to begin with, then a Father of the Church, who could speak the most outlandish languages. These were women full of sap and energy, whom no one was astonished to see taking by main force the first rank in the spheres of literature, philosophy and theology."¹

But their very names are unfamiliar to us now, and their works, where are they ? The mystic savant, Aloysia Sygea, half French but wholly Spanish in her endowments, was doomed for long to unjust notoriety through a disreputable work passed off under her name. But of her own writings, all the results of an advanced classical education and hard study in the very midst of the distractions of court life, what do we now know save that they never probably saw the light, and that, in the words of her epitaph, " Her modesty rivalled her knowledge of languages." As to the enormous amount of work accomplished by Beatrice of Galindo, or La Latina, as she was called by the Queen, it was never published. Widowed while still young, childless, immensely rich, her many gifts were consecrated to the religious life, to the building of convents and hospitals (one of which still

¹ *Femmes de la Renaissance*. R. de Maulde de Clavière. Translated by Geo. H. Ely.

bears her name in Madrid), in fact to the contagious renunciation of the gifts of life, which was half malady, half religion, in those days. Given the gifts which the world was crying out for, and which the life of the monastery could no longer find full vent for, as in the earlier centuries of conventual power, the renunciation made by the many talented and unusual women of that day seems curiously strained and overwrought. If the mysticism of their characters became world-famed from their choice, the intellectual life was arrested. So many gifts that seemed divine in the midst of men became too human for a community of exalted ascetics; much, in fact, that was real, was sacrificed for shadows. It was the age of intellectual martyrdom, of majestic error, but in contemplating it from a healthier though less exalted standpoint, the exquisite words of Victor Hugo in his analysis of convent life, seem to soothe away all questioning; "*Le sacrifice qui porte à faux est encore le sacrifice. Prendre pour devoir une erreur sévère, cela a sa grandeur.*" Sublime words which help towards the comprehension of a people's mystic greatness, forcing life's vocations in homage of their stern motto—"Suffer or die." So, gifted in no ordinary degree, following in the wake of their first brilliant Queen, in the very shadow of the Moorish days when female intellect and talent had always shone with a bright if spasmodic light in Moorish Spain, the most renowned of the women of Spanish history hid their lights under mystic veils—veils that time has rendered yet more opaque.

So, too, in spite of the extraordinary amount of freedom which allowed women to show learning unabashed, in spite of the seclusion of their social life, their flights of imagination and of intellect seemed ever checked as by some mysterious interference, till mysticism itself became the crowning attribute of their age, and Saint Theresa, swept away at the age of six, "by the violent movement of love," becomes the ideal of all her countrywomen for all ages. Even as far on as during the reign

of Isabella II. this indication of unfulfilled promise, of arrested effort, is still to be traced, now through the enchaining legends of the past. The young dramatic writer, Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda, lyrical and romantic writer, who first had the courage as a woman to brave the indiscriminating criticism of her country and produce a work for the stage, never fulfilled her promise of success. First a slave to the past, then, after years of convent life, endeavouring once more to take up the threads of love and romance, she was a typical example of the Spanish woman of ambitious gifts, who refuses to belong to her century.¹



CLOISTER, SAN JUAN LOS REYES,
TOLEDO.

It is to the cloistered and narrow life of the convent, rather than to the brilliant light of court, to the Book of Saints rather than to that of history or even of romance, to the pulpit, not to the scholastic chair, that those who would follow the emotional story of women's lives and work in Spain, must almost inevitably turn. To the convent all intellect has tended and still tends by tradition. In it is hidden the real power of Spanish women in the past, whether that power be of mere intrigue, intellectual ambition or religious fervour. In it has thrived as nowhere else in the world a mysticism at once wonderful and horrible, a picture of the female soul and of intellectual bondage, which even to-day can hardly be gazed upon without fear, so dark yet luminous a mirror is it for soul and mind, for the sublime soaring of the one, and the self-torture of the other.

¹ *Histoire de la Littérature Contemporaine en Espagne.* Gustave Hubbard.

The convent, generally speaking, seems an austere, a cold enough place at best. It shuts out the joy of living, the natural warm-bloodedness of life. Once the oases of civilisation, "good in the tenth century, doubtful in the fifteenth, useless in the nineteenth," its use in the world has diminished, and with its use its fire. But Spanish women bequeathed to it a far different character, till the world that it shut out seemed cold in comparison. The story of convent life in Spain is the story of hearts as well as souls—a terrible romance of passionate natures carried away within "the soul's sphere of infinite images."

In the North natures become austere and calm under the influence of the spiritual life. In Spain, on the contrary, they were exalted to a pitch of nervous agony, a spiritual sensuality which alike wore out body and soul. Nothing can be imagined at once more human and exalted than the life of Saint Theresa, that enthusiastic reader of romances as her mother had been before her, swayed by all the hunger of a girl's heart for admiration, for pleasure, dress, and love; battling against them all with the book of a great fellow-sufferer in her hands, the *Confessions of Saint Augustine*. Her personality still penetrates her native town, and Avila is lifeless without the mysticism of her age, which clings still to its Carpaccio-like beauty; and still, through one of the town's ogive-arched portals, we seem to see an eager child and her brother running swiftly in the direction of Salamanca in search of a fantastic martyrdom for love of Christ. If she is called a "love-sick nun," there have been thousands such, but few women like Saint Theresa.¹ In religion she raised the ideal of sentiment by a new eloquence, obliging feeling to replace reasoning. Gifted as she was, powerful writer, poet, energetic leader of souls, never did she bring to bear the least of her reasoning powers upon her religious teachings. Spain alone could have produced such a woman, the convent only could have given her a wide enough field. The mysticism of love, and love only, swayed her being, and through

¹ Mrs. Jamieson.

her has swayed countless others. This poet-mystic has breathed forth her wonderful capacity for divine devotion in her famous sonnet, of which the following is only a rough translation ;—

“I am not moved at heart, O God, to love Thee
 By the radiance of Thy promised Heaven,
 By the terrors of Thy Hell's depths even—
 I do not feel *their* aweing power to move me ;
 'Tis Thou, my God—only to hear Thee sighing
 Nailed upon the cross with shrinking body,
 —Moves me to see those piteous wounds so bloody,
 Moves me to see the anguish of Thy dying.
 I am in truth swayed by Thy love so surely
 E'en without Heav'n's promise I would revere Thee,
 E'en without Hell itself still would I fear Thee—
 Nor could I—hope or fear—love Thee more purely.
 Without Love's hope, or Love's divine fear proving,
 Still must I love Thee, God, with the same loving.”¹

Such were the women for whom the life of the convent in Spain seems especially to have thrived. Whether they made it, or it them, opinions may well differ, but without that monastic existence, which vaguely centralised the intellectual life of the day, such types could only have passed into the vortex of emotional fire, leaving ashes behind. It is owing to the religious existence that something of their majesty has been preserved ; and on this traditional majesty the women of to-day, good, bad or indifferent, worldly or unworldly, little or much endowed, are still formed. The qualities that fitted them for a past age are still insisted upon, the writers of to-day are yet proud to portray the old workings of the mind, the same shadows. In Spain respect for the past is a disease, and as long as it ferments beneath the smooth modernised surface, who can say what *are* those women of Spain. Let them, rather, declare with their old pride :

“Who shall say what is said in me,
 With all that I might have been dead in me.”

¹ Translated from the Spanish.



A ROAD IN GIBRALTAR.

CHAPTER VIII

In the Shadow of Islam

"In the soul of me sits sluggishness ;
Body so strong and will so weak."

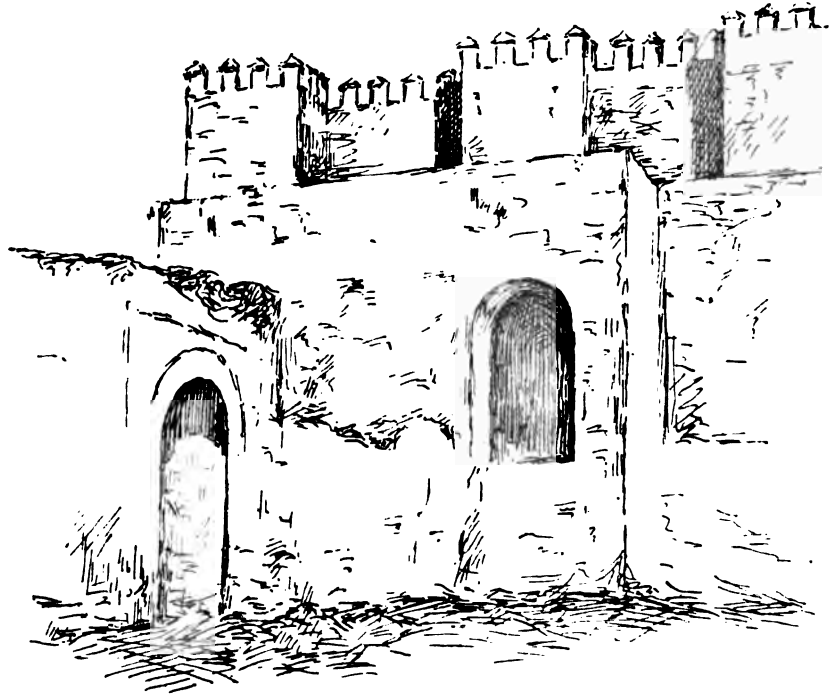
—*Ferishtah's Fancies.* BROWNING.

THE strip of classic water that divides Spain from Africa seems little more than a channel when on some clear day the opposite coast is detected from Tarifa. From there, beyond the whiteness of the Tangiers buildings, we see in imagination a jutting garden outlook, a flower-perfumed bower above the lapping waves, from which the hills of the peninsula are visible. In Algeciras, with its cactus and geranium hues, its intense quiet, its sweet and dreamy air, we find a kind of bay window, as it were, from which to look out of Spain with mind as well as eyes ; where the half invisible distances seem to be continually drawing both towards something new. From here, so near the limits of the western world

"In quella parte ove surge ad aprire
Zeffiro dolce le novelle fronde,"

that aggressive Ceuta is dimly seen, where the young Camoens first tried his arms against the Moors, and from which, eight centuries earlier, Tarik, with his handful of Ceuta Berbers, organised his invasion of Spain. To Tarik, legend gives the credit of the first blow ; to Musa, with his Medina followers, the glories of conquest ; to the Berber Julian the help needed for their success. Tarik the hero, Musa the saint, Julian the traitor, they all measured from there the dancing barrier between them and the land of their ambitions, far too narrow a mirror in those days for Cross and Crescent to reflect their

symbolic lights within, without kindling fire. But, as time has proved, "El Islam is essentially an Asiatic form of belief, and could not progress beyond the limits opposed to it by geography. Not having a St. Paul to modify it, to change it, the Saving Faith



OLD MOORISH WALLS, TARIFA.

broke upon the rock of a new race."¹ Nevertheless Islam maintained itself in Spain for a long time, and has left many an echo of its influence to clash with western progress, or to remind us of how continually an obliterated force leaves something of vitality behind.

"A stick, once fire from end to end;
Now, ashes, save the tip that holds a spark,
Yet, blow the spark, it runs back, spreads itself
A little where the fire was. . . ."

¹ *El Islam*. Sir R. Burton.

Indeed, who that has wandered through Southern Spain has not asked himself from whence arose the strange fanaticism which has crystallised the Spaniards, as Islam has the Arabs. Does it originate in the people or in their religion? There is certainly a curious analogy between the two races in the effect their creeds have had upon them. They too, like the Arabs, were spurred on by a "Holy War," invaded countries and built up an Empire which crumbled away. For a brilliant period after their faith had triumphed by the sword, literature, the arts and science, all flourished. But as with the Arabs their religion was followed by coercion, by absolute dogma. The Arab Inquisition was closely followed by that of Spain, till, after a brief reign of splendour, it likewise crushed the people's life; and Mohamedanism and Spanish Catholicism have both followed the same course, "liberal quand il a été faible, et violent quand il a été fort." Both races have allowed a false interpretation of their creed to obscure the light of intellectual progress, and the word "Fanaticism," which European races have monopolised to describe the condition of Mohamedan countries, embraces with no less truth the lands where the Mohamedans colonised.

Certainly the study of fanaticism in religion in all its varied phases, whether among the Jews of the Bible, the Christians of the Middle Ages, or the natives of Arabia and Africa, is full of curious interest, and we see how especially it has ever affected certain qualities of human susceptibility, and always in the same way—either in a disregard to, or delight in physical suffering. The Arab's insusceptibility to pain, owing to religious fervour, is a strong mental chloroform induced by fanaticism, and encourages



PORTICO OF A CHURCH AT RONDA.

a decay of nervous power, a physical dulness which is closely allied to mental sleep. So in Mediæval Spain the delight in voluntary martyrdom or in the tortures of the Inquisition was the form that Spanish decadence took with its increasing fanaticism ; and to-day, in certain parts of Andalusia where the fanatical spirit of northern Africa lingered the longest, in Seville, Granada, and far from least Ronda, the pleasures of the bull-fight, from which all the spirit of sport and equally pitted struggle has been removed, is, perhaps, a distinct outcome of the same quality, the deadening of certain subtleties of nervous life, which corresponds with a mental decline. For morally and intellectually the hypnotism of African fanaticism is on the people of Andalusia still, not only on their art and customs. El Islam is spoken of as powerful in its influence upon the races professing it, but the influence of the Arab on his religion is much more remarkable. So in Spain, though

“ The cross is sparkling on the mosque,
And bells make catholic the trembling air,”

we trace the same force, the degradation of the people who have made a Koran of their Bible, a besotted interpretation of their faith. “ Les religions valent ce que valent les races qui les professent.”

In three countries, in Southern Italy, in Andalusia and in Portugal, the worship of the Virgin has been allowed to reach such an extreme of exaggeration that the very expression of praying to God, common to the language of all other Catholic countries, is unknown there. As long ago as the sixteenth century, Cervantes in his great work made an effort, though a covert one, to draw attention to the drift of events, but in vain. The spirit of exaltation which had lent such colour and heroic meaning to the religious struggle of Moorish Spain—even to the most unreasoning and vain acts of worship and martyrdom—was early debased to a sentimental frenzy in Andalusia, a distinctly Oriental sensualism which even the pure beauty of Murillo's canvases could not elevate. There is no doubt that this abuse of

sentiment in their religion, not unlike, to use a simile, the overdose of romanticism in literature which tends inevitably towards general decadence, has affected the moral and intellectual standpoint of all these people, just as in El Islam the ignorant interpretation of the Koran, which the Arab's limited reasoning power has crystallised into falsity, has affected the mental attitude of Northern Africa.

In this we trace the real weakness of Islam—it is practised by races intellectually inferior to those who follow the dictates of Christ. It may be pointed out that this implies a corresponding inferiority in the creed of the saving faith itself; but it has been suggested by more than one authority that none of the three great religions of the world are, in a wide sense, inferior to each other.¹ “New truths, old truths, sirs, there is nothing new possible to be revealed to us in the moral world; we know all that we shall ever know, and it is for simply reminding us, by their various respective expedients, how we do know this and that other matter, that men get called prophets, poets and the like.”²

The contradictions offered in the pages of the Koran are as open to generous interpretation as are those of the Bible, and side by side with violent words and bloody appeals to force, are found precepts of charity and even justice, while the dogma is simplicity itself. The secret, therefore, of religious degradation probably lies less in the creed than in the limited mentality of those who follow it, and it would be extreme to sympathise with the opinion of the blind and embittered precursor of Omar Khayyam³ that the inhabitants of the earth divide themselves into two categories—those gifted with intelligence and without religion, and those with religion but deprived of intelligence. There is very little doubt that the low moral status of the Mohamedans of Africa, and, in another degree, of the Andalusians of Spain, springs not only from a fanatical form of faith, but from mental limitations

¹ Compare in this connection an Imperial letter published in Germany in 1903.

² R. Browning.

³ Abou'l-'Alâ 'Al-Ma 'arrî.

as well. Still, to-day, in these very corners of two continents where the spirit of menace was once so fierce, we may still ask ourselves which is the strongest of these two of three tremendous forces in the world's history ; which has spread its wings the further and least felt the geographical limits of religion ; which is best able to hold its own ; one as the religion of the intellectual West, backed up by civilisation, with a hundred dogmas and sects, the other what it was thirteen centuries ago, perfectly united, since its four cults are all orthodox, unprogressive, unchanged and sublimely unreasoning. Both are spreading in numbers, one through conversion, the other through steady increase of population, which in many parts of the Mohamedan world is considerable. The total number of Mohamedans to-day is estimated at two hundred and sixty millions—probably many more, since statistics outside the Russian Empire, India, Algeria or Tunis, are vague. China is said to number thirty-three millions of Mohamedans, the cause of endless internal civil warfare. In the Malay peninsula, El Islam is solidly rooting itself and undermining the native paganism without difficulty. It is, then, without an effort, on the increase ; without an effort (save in certain areas of the Asiatic world), to run with the times, with the “ change, the one thing changeless ” of men's minds. Does this indicate that Islam appeals very especially to minds unwilling to problematise, types of mind that must have their legitimate scope in the world's completeness, their own typical religious expression, no less than desert wastes and fertile fields share the earth's surface, the one unalterable, the other admirably adaptive?

Change and sameness seem to be the two great elements in the struggle of the world's mentality, and the disciples of each are still unequally pitted, the great East frowning languidly at the young world's strides. For the strength of the East is apathy, and apathy is a crime in the eyes of progress. There seems no place in so small a sphere for its inert body, the body of a giant, like to that of the blind Cyclops. But want of space will hardly

see the vanishing of Mohamedanism, nor will the old prophecy that for long has existed in northern Africa, that the Christian faith will return and reassert its power successfully in every spot from which it was once exiled, hasten its end. Far from that, Monotheism in a modernised garb, shorn of the heritage of primitive customs which we would deny to the followers of Mohamed because our world has never needed them, will once more sharpen its sword for the old struggle with its great antagonist, a struggle which, perhaps, will never wear itself out save by respites, since the conversion of Mohamedans to Christianity, or *vice versa*, is a colourless chimera. In the case of the community of Mohamedans in England, whose leader staggers under the weight of Oriental honours, and some, at least, of whose members have had reason to find out too late that the collision it leads to with the Moorish character is not quite satisfactory to the European standards of civilisation, we see only an eccentric growth natural to an age when sects rise and disappear, their restless lights extinguished without leaving any impression on the mental workings of the religious world.

Evangelising, as we understand it, plays no part in Islam. We read—those at least who can—upon the walls of the Alhambra, “Truth lives, lies die away, and it is in the decrees of Allah to interrogate no one.” The Christian converted by proselytism is no more Mohamedan than the Arab occupation of foreign countries in the past could be considered as a religious victory morally. It was a religious victory by force, and it is in this light that it stands unique in history. From the death of Mohamed proselytising played no part. The Arab writers who mention the conquest in the West, rarely express any interest in religious conversion. In the early days of Islam and the Moorish conquest only here and there is there any notice of some act of propaganda in Africa ; but in Spain, none. The indifference to the part reasoning plays in individual belief, the

dislike to all questioning, shows a curious affinity to the Egyptian mind of the past. The Musulman to-day does not even believe that his religion *can* be acquired by reasoning, the weight of which would be a burden the soul could not bear. The well-known answer of the marabout to the suppliant who sought to know definitely whether smoking was likely to land him nearer hell than heaven, is an example of the diplomatic avoidance of a direct answer, so dear to the Arab mind: "All I can tell you, my friend," was the holy man's reply, "is that the fire is not far from your nose."

So again we come to the same question, Whether or not the so-called religious degradation of the Mohamedans of Africa is not due to their lack of progressive intelligence rather than to the limitations of their Koran. We see among the Mohamedans of other races a wider reading of its confused precepts; nor must it be forgotten that the awakening of the Tartars which is said to be at hand, will be due to no weakening in their faith, but to the workings of the intellectual life which in many an old race seems to have fallen into trance not death. If Islam has fallen as low as it well can among the sects of Persia, there rose, three hundred years ago, from the midst of the Musulmans of western India (now as many as fifty-seven millions in number), the proud effort of the Emperor Akbar to found a universal religion based on free philosophical principles. But the religion of Allah, as it was called, is not for our world; nevertheless, a proof that what the good men do is *not* always interred with their bones, the effort left a distinct endeavour to harmonise Islam with the exigencies of European civilisation without losing anything of its religious fervour. No religion, mono- or pantheistic, is irreconcilable with progress. The great prophets of the past have always been infinitely wiser than those they sought to convert. An intellectual race can well afford to hold to any belief, as the greatest races have always shown, since however it may retard, it cannot hold it back. And it is impossible to deny that, in

spite of the phases of fanaticism and dogmatism through which Christian religions have had to pass, civilisation has advanced, and what is more conclusive, science as well.

But whatever flights the soul of Islam has taken in the past or will take, where do we trace any transitory condition in the Arab? Has he changed from what he was thirteen centuries ago? If, as is the historian's verdict, his religion hopelessly cripples him, what of the free-thinking Arabs who have always counted a goodly percentage from Morocco to Tunis? The Separatists, or Free Thinkers of Islam, as they are called, who endeavoured in close study of Greek philosophy to find a solution to all dogmatic problems, and who treated the Koran and its traditions in a wider sense, never succeeded in displaying any genuine theological reasoning. Devout or otherwise, careless in the practice of their faith or reciting the Koran from end to end, the Arab offers ever the same barrier to all enlightenment or advance. The colonisers of Mohamedan Africa are not to be entirely envied. They have to meet a force which no wisdom can penetrate—the force of mental limitation. Curiously enough, this limitation has dawned but slowly upon the colonising mind in Algeria and Morocco. As long as the Arab was a warlike power, backed by the halo of a dashing courage, the freedom of his nomad life and the chimera of possible conversion, he was poetised by a romantic school of Orientalists. His very faith seen from afar had something of the rude poetry of the desert and of a splendid past. He was not an unworthy foe,

“La main ouverte
Le sabre tiré.
Et une seule parole.”

But to-day the tide has changed in favour of the ruder but more amalgamatable Berber. The Arab has proved himself by instinct, tradition and intelligence, as opposed to civilisation. He is limp, nomad, aristocratic and idle. The Berber, however,

is more energetic and impressionable to new influences, more indifferent to religion, or rather his religious belief is open to the term of schism which in this case presents an apparent advantage. To explain these divergencies among the followers of the Prophet, the Arabs employ a simple simile. The four orthodox rites are compared to four travellers drinking from the same fountain but from different vessels. A fifth drinks also, but only after agitating the water which he swallows clouded. This is the case with the Berbers, who whether in religion or otherwise, have always asserted their independence, and kept up the same standard of a rude but proud people. But the Arab has retrograded persistently since the fall of the Moorish Empire, not because of his religion but because of his mental poverty.

Islam is as the fountain head of Moorish history in Spain, just as it is the turbid pool from which everything starts in northern Africa. But was not the water of that fountain clear when first it bubbled up through the arid life of Arabia, through the profound indifference to religious unity of its gay and thoughtless tribes? The religious feeling in the nomad was curiously undeveloped. Far from being naturally devout¹ his desert home resisted religion with energy. Indeed, in spite of his natural ardour of temperament, religious belief which so appeals to the imagination meant singularly little to this unimaginative people. Their idolatry would seem to have been a parasitic growth gathered perhaps in remote times from Egypt, and little adapted to their race. They had their gods but no mythology. Those gods had no past, no history, nor did anyone seek to compose one. This makes one realise how much hold the old mythology must have had on the Greek mind, not because of the belief in the gods themselves, but because of the poetry of imagination which so enveloped them. But the Arabs had only idols easily shattered ; nothing about them that could

¹ Dozy.



VIEW OF TANGIER FROM THE BEACH.

live on as fairy stories remain in some corner of the mind from childhood. Lack of invention is the keynote to the character of all children of the desert, and Mohamed, himself uninventive though so marvellously enlightened, could only offer them a simple monotheism built up upon borrowed institutions of Judaism and the old pagan cult, and professing nothing more than the purifying of existing religions which the corruption of their followers had debased beyond recognition.

Imbued with all the sternness of mediæval Christianity he depicted not only the Muslim's Paradise but the horrors of hell and the approaching judgment. Preaching in rhythmic prose after the manner of his country and which shows how old was the veneration given to poetry by the Arabs, he was looked upon as a deluded poet who indulged in fables. But as time went on no wonder that the Meccans began to look upon the despised prophet in their midst more seriously. Who was this man, noble but obscure, calling himself Prophet and preaching miracles, preaching, too, a vast unity among tribes who had always shown themselves singularly opposed to all cohesion? The danger surrounding an Arab who dared to separate himself from the ideas and customs of his tribe showed a determined courage in facing tribal complications, a danger which finesse alone could not have protected him against, and which was probably only kept in check by adherents making common cause with him until it became difficult to accuse any one apart. From where did his courage and immovable conviction arise? It has always been difficult to precise Mohamed's character. He came from a race which offers little contradiction to a single type. The Arab of that day was essentially the same as the Arab of a long yesterday and as of to-morrow. Yet from the first Mohamed presented a strange contrast to the robust natives of Arabia. Impressionable and nervous in constitution, tormented by religious doubts, he exhibits an almost total trans-

formation from the old type. He may not have been superior to others of his race, but he certainly did not resemble them. Whether under the influence of stronger minds or only swayed by his own questionings, how or when he first felt the dictates of a divine message, only legend can tell us. But a man of forty is more likely to listen to his own reasonings than to another's, and Mohamed had passed that age—a ripe one for the desert—when his vocation, definitely revealed to him, allowed him to enter on the prophetic stage of his career, a life of stern and despondent hardship.

Nothing in history, it has been pointed out, is more remarkable than the condition of crowds of human beings influenced and swayed by a veritable religious epidemic, a contagious mysticism resulting in the conversion of masses of individuals such as may be seen among the Christians of the Middle Ages, or in the history of El Islam. But Mohamed did not live to see the miracle of the full tide's turn. Long after his death the new faith was only kept in existence through the bloody quarrels of the old and new *noblesse* of Arabia, the aristocratic paganism as against the lately created aristocracy of the Defenders of the Faith. Difficult as it often is to find a junction for human sympathies with the Arab, past and present, we are at least on familiar ground when it comes to the question of pride of birth, and we see across the centuries how powerful a part social traditions played amongst the most primitive of people, penetrating into their religious belief no less than into their social customs. But we see that the Prophet, in spite of his remarkable insight into the character of his race, never fully realised the part heredity was to play among his people. He had vacillated over the unwritten laws of precedence which the Bedouin, rude as he was, clung to; unwilling to recognise the superficially converted pagan *noblesse* of his country, in the place of his devoted adherents, he met the difficulty by preaching for a while a fine doctrine of equality, the last in the world this people of proud tradition could understand.

But little by little those who had shared his early hardships were allotted all the posts of honour, his principle of equality undermined itself, and Islam was dragged through seas of jealous blood which flowed even to the shores of Spain.

Those red seas have wiped out that early struggle. All this is now of the past, and Mohamed's newly-founded *noblesse* has won the battle in the long run. The aristocracy of the descendants of the Prophet is now sanctified by religion, and no one would dream of disputing it. "The head is the head, the tail is the tail," is an Arab maxim.

But older still than the traditions of nobility, history tells us of another internal struggle of that strange desert country which no religion in the world could calm ; a terrible dormant feud to which Mohamed, by his agitating of tribal problems, was destined to give new vigour and bitterness. Two factions, each representing a vast number of tribes had, far back into antiquity, exhibited a refinement of hatred towards each other such as has never been surpassed in history. The origin of the feud is lost in the ages. In other countries a quarrel has a motive ; in Arabia none. "The original hostility," says an old poet, "came from our ancestors, and as long as there are descendants it will last. Neither knew why he hated the other with such racial hatred. Both races had the same Semitic origin, both shared the same country, the same language, in time to come the same religion. Yet still the old hatred exists, and to-day the descendants of the two antagonistic parties about Jerusalem are sworn foes of each other, yet know not why. Because a melon was picked by one in the garden of the other, because by accident a leaf from the vineyard of one was plucked by his foe, the war of years followed. Three or four hundred years later the feud was revived in Europe, and on the borders of the Guadalquivir the same mortal struggle was renewed, Arab sapping the strength of Arab, revenging himself for an unknown injury which seas of

blood had already wiped away. And to this strange people, balanced between unquenchable jealousies and fiery pride, Mohamed, among them and yet wholly apart, preached his doctrine of reform, his fountain for the desert.

The character of Mohamed united two elements usually admitted to be antagonistic ; a passionate enthusiasm of youth with the cold calculation of age. His youth belongs to mysticism, his manhood to military leadership, his last years to both. During his farewell pilgrimage to Mecca, in his preaching of that time, old as he was, may be traced the enthusiasm of his early youth rather than any new and matured policy for the future. We see once more the visionary speaking to a people who never understood his words until he preached with his sword unsheathed. He was a dreamer, but the most politic of men. Napoleon himself was not more ambitious or diplomatic. In the face of ceaseless danger, and often the apparent hopelessness of his cause, his courage never failed him. Did it arise from absolute conviction in his divine message? Voltaire considered him an impostor of genius, while to others he is impostor because there is an apparent lack of unity between his early strictness of life with the conduct of his later days. But a prophet is not a god; and if for over twenty-three years he ever seemed to those around him, in the most humble surroundings of life, still a prophet, that is much to be said of weak mortal. To some he is the victim of epilepsy, because he suffered from visions or hallucinations, but epileptics are said to lose the impressions and memory of their visions, and Mohamed remembered his with startling clearness. He has been called a sufferer from hysteria, but were this so, he must have been physically a suffering and often incapable creature, morally as well as physically. In his life, on the contrary, we trace only a robust determination which always got the better of a nervous organisation. From beginning to end, with one exception, it was perfectly consistent, diplomatic,



GATE IN THE OLD TOWN WALL, TANGIER.

and alert, and the absence of logical reasoning in the Koran would not point to any mental inferiority, given the race from which he sprang. Perhaps the least of his several claims to the rôle of a genuine prophet, inspired by an ardent and visionary mind, may be recognised in the extreme persecution which pursued him for the first ten years of his life, the true heritage of the true prophet, borne with a fortitude only reasonable, given his faith. If he was but the natural outcome of the circumstances and unrest surrounding him, he is no less a natural phenomena unequalled in history. The great wave of religious enthusiasm which was surely sweeping over the whole of Europe, caught him on its crest instead of engulfing him. His religion swept away gods and idols, and spread with tremendous force over Egypt and Africa, Spain and Sicily, the deserts of the Atlas, the banks of the Ganges. It laid the foundation of a civilisation whose corner-stones were Empire-building, unity, order, and religious fraternity. No ordinary Arab was this, a great Napoleon among prophets, founder of Empire, would-be destroyer of old traditions, maker of laws, who passed away while his throne was still tottering.

But those laws, though defective and in no way essential to the saving faith, live on. Without comparing the imperfect germ of Mohamed's code with the Code Napoléon, yet might not some parallel be drawn to the posthumous influence of Napoleon's own law-making work upon the history of France? Students of contemporaneous history are frequently led to the conclusion that radical changes in the government of France are impossible, so completely has his great work crystallised the constitutional development of the people. It remains and will always remain the same, no matter what outward forms may change. For this reason the colonisation by France of Mohamedan countries offers a discouraging barrier, an officialdom which robs the colonising government of all freedom, insight and scope. So, through no

intention of his own, Mohamed's words, inscribed without any revision, crystallised the laws of his religion and reduced his descendants to accept from the infidel an analogy to the old choice which was offered to conquered countries : the choice of the Koran or the sword.

Why did one so astute and so eager for codified reform, leave the Koran in a condition of possible misinterpretation. Why did Mohamed neglect this part of his heritage to his new kingdom, and preserve with so little care words into which he had nevertheless breathed a fiery eloquence ? We know that the palm-leaf substitutes for paper, jotted over with impassioned notes, passed in a still embryo condition to the Khalif Usman, who patched them together with the ambiguity dear to the Arab mind, sealing the mass of half-intelligible matter with his unwilling life-blood. Then came another, more scholarly and therefore still more ambiguous, who gave the finishing touches, until it has come down to us, a masterpiece of crude iterations, of endless repetition, unintelligible to the average Mohamedan, who learns it by heart without the least desire—after the eager questioning of boyhood has been quashed—to grapple with its entanglements. Yet who can turn over the pages of this Book of the Desert without a strong sentiment of wonder and admiration for its enduring power ? It was not written for us, and translated or not, its whole language never can reach us. He who wrote those fragments never dreamed, perhaps, of how enduring its pages were to be among his followers, relying for his success upon far higher claims than any book.¹ But there it stands, a monument that fills us with despair, not because it represents fairly either El Islam or its antagonism towards the thought of our times, but because in its pages is locked away the intelligence of the Arab mind.

¹ *El Islam*. Burton.



A MARABOUT NEAR TANGIER.

CHAPTER IX

Morocco

"The Power of Destiny rocks one to dreams, while another it awakens from profound slumber."
Abou'l-Alâ 'Al-Ma 'arri.

"I LOVE all that I have never seen," once said a child eager to travel. Men, too, sometimes feel the same odd sentiment, a peculiar attraction towards what may elude them or may still be too strange to decipher. Such is Morocco still to many, but the traveller, the explorer who cuts the first steps in a rock, or the historian who gives the practical summary of his uphill work, is at a disadvantage here. In Morocco, nature and native character alike are as wind-swept sands that keep no trace of or for European feet, no treaties with history, no tangible touch with Europe past or present. Men learn the language till they talk it as natives themselves, penetrate a dangerous country clothed in rags, endure fevers, are kidnapped (though, in truth, this is no longer looked upon as a misfortune), feel profound sympathy with the Berbers and their ways of life, write books, theorise passionately, knowing, as it were, things too well to judge dispassionately any longer, and yet arrive at no goal, till in time the very vagueness of the profit of devotion to a strange soil affects the men themselves. Morocco seems always to consume away the labour expended upon it, rendering it as ungrateful as the weather-chart entries of a diary, the traveller's unfortunate prerogative, as the following lines from an artistic journey through Morocco help to illustrate:—

January 8. A white frost covers the stiffened vegetation.

„ 13. The rain has ceased. . . . We start in cloudy and damp weather.

„ 14. The morning is bright with sunshine, a fresh breeze, and the weather continues fine.

January 18. The night was cold.

„ 19. The morning is fresh, the air keen.

„ 22. Abominably cold this morning, and the snow falling.

A land of contrast is Morocco! Even in its weather To-day and To-morrow are as wide apart in their essence as desert and oasis. It was but some few months ago that these peaceful words were written :—

“ La situation se trouve ainsi fixée au point de vue *diplomatique* et notre influence peut s'exercer sur les territoires qui nous sont acquis, sans avoir à craindre de la part de quelque autre puissance européenne, ou des prétentions qui puissent se légitimer.”¹

Yet half a century earlier, the French flag in the vicinity of Tangiers roused other feelings and “ quand les Anglais virent une armée française sous les ordres du gouverneur-général d'Algérie entrer dans le Maroc, et une escadre française commandée par un fils du roi paraître devant Tanger, l'inquiétude fut grande, et Sir Robert Peel, toujours très attentif aux impressions publiques, s'en préoccupa vivement.” Events move quickly now in Morocco, and though the French no longer echo the words of the writer Blanc that there is a nation too many in the world, and that either France must perish or England be erased from the map, she might, by substituting the name of another nation for that of England, find the phrase no less useful in her summing-up of her position in Morocco to-day. There is always a sentiment of the morrow and the new life it may bring in the atmosphere of this country, always the feeling of a land far too beautiful for the footprints of the tramping world to stride across. Could even a Napoleon—preaching Islam with new zest and turning his back on the Pope (rejoicing, too, that the France of to-day has by no means forgotten that attitude of the First Empire)—settle the entrancing Moroccan question without the feathers of the

¹ *La France en Afrique.* Par Edmond Ferry.



ENTRANCE TO THE SULTAN'S PALACE, TANGIER.

peacock's tail sweeping him angrily into the sea? Who can tell but some of the Napoleonic characteristics might not have been out of place at a certain moment; might have shone, perhaps, uncommonly brightly in interrogating the Sphinx of Islam, which hides as far as it can from the coast capital of Tangiers, from that half European, half Jewish town of seemingly so little political importance, known to the whole world through a graceful literature of many tongues.

Of little political importance is Tangiers superficially, but what a breakwater. He of the three tongues—one that says Yes, one that says No, and one that says neither Yes nor No—must be well aware of the fact to-day. Every invader and would-be coloniser has broken his bark against its angry and beautiful shores. Morocco, able to hold herself independent of her eight ports, has more or less sacrificed Tangiers to Europe. Occupied successively by nation after nation, by Roman, Goth and Arab, by Portuguese and English and Spanish, bombarded by the French, badly protected, inhabited by a lazy conglomeration of Moors, Jews and Nigros, all vampiring each other with inhuman indifference, both Tangiers and Ceuta have proved empty conquests. All the reinforcements and provisioning by sea, the easy retreat by the opposite coasts, have never simplified progress into the interior. Ceuta and Tangiers have been as twin rocks on which the Mediterranean of history has launched tragedy after tragedy of ambitious



A NATIVE OF TANGIERS.

shipwreck ; and Portugal—what memories are hers to haunt this coast. Here came the young Dom Sebastian with the words of Camoens filling his youthful heart with unweighed ambition,—“Thou shalt leave thy boyhood behind thee, and armed in manliness, take the reins of State in thy grasp, and carry thine arms across Africa and the East, which tremble. Already the Moors pale in divining thy prophecy of their ruin . . .” Here he vanished away, and was mourned not as for the dead, but as for one who was young and strong and must return. Here, over a century earlier, another young and ardent prince gave himself as hostage, and was never seen again. Here came Camoens, the unfortunate, hoping to heal the wound on which, perhaps, the riband of Catherine still lay hidden,

“Keep my riband, take and keep it,
(I have loosed it from my hair),”

came and fought and won nothing. But in the pages of the great Portuguese epic, inspired with the extraordinary patriotism of his native land, is found, as nowhere else, the crusading spirit of this age which for long haunted the coast of Morocco, unable to penetrate into its midst.

Tangiers never changes. In the descriptions of travels of a hundred years ago and more, we seem still to recognise the very sentiment with which it is still approached, the warm charm and *divertissement* it has exercised on so many types of mind. The curious medley of human beings has always arrested the same attention ; the bigoted Moors with their sun-hardened skulls, the degraded Jews whose lot here, however, is more assured than in the interior ; the little Jewish girls with henna-tinted feet and hands, in sign of their precocious marriages ; the beautiful Jewish women who, as M. Didier has pointed out as an inexplicable phenomena, have never fallen as low in their physical type as the men ; the fine indifferent Berbers ; and not least the lovely Moorish children who possess the grace which can make all children classic in the old sense of the word, while here some-



THE GREAT MOSQUE, TANGIER.

thing else is theirs as well—a quite nameless charm worthy of a sweeter setting, for the roads they play in—"quelles rues infectes!" But this is the side of the life of Tangiers on which none can dwell without repetition. Though less artistic, it might be juster to consider this spot as a kind of pugilistic theatre, where no quarrels have ever been solved. And in this theatre of unholy warfare the consuls of the world sit and wait, for there is nothing else to do—the real drama goes on across the hills and far away.

It is a very exquisite theatre. There is more poetry in the sea breezes that penetrate to the hearts of its gardens; that sweep clean and cool over the wave-filmed sands, than about any other coast of Islam. It is the very land of Arab poetry and song. Everything luxuriously lovely in nature, flagrantly joyful, fiercely warm, belongs to its breath of life. If the Moors braved many a barren site for the setting of their jewels of art in Spain, they could find nothing here but a naturally fair frame of gold and azure, a very home for palaces and fairy interiors. To-day Morocco is the only living though blurred reflection of that art in which Spain once gloried, an art which, from its wayward imitation of itself, happily never expressed the tangible decadence affecting the life of the country itself. But the very word decadence must be used with reserve in discussing the Moors of Andalusia or of Fez. There is not a trace of it to-day in their fanaticism and healthy Oriental inertia. Quite indescribably proud and sanctified by traditional independence are country and people alike, a monarchical monument of the Oriental interpretation of the "simple life" which it seems a pity to have



A CITIZEN OF TANGIERS.

to dissolve. Tolstoi—to quote from one who has already quoted his words '—is, as it were, exalted with indignation against our modern civilisation which poisons the free breath of life ; crushing thousands of beings into towns, factories and miserable dwellings, where the greater part of the ills of mankind are gendered, and



A WOMAN OF TANGIERS.

making through the technical progress of experimental science less for human happiness than for its misfortune. To him new discoveries are only medicines for their own diseases, progress only diminishes the natural blessings already possessed by humanity. Is it to be so with every race under the sun, and is progress insidiously necessary to races that have existed so long and so bravely without its ill? Will the smoke of factories blacken the sands of Africa, and the natives of Morocco be drawn irresistibly towards town existence as they show themselves to be in Algeria, clustering together in the whirlpool of busy prisons, dropping their free lithe skins and turning into flabby Moors, the only metamorphosis which Arab and Berber

knows of by which to interpret the bodily decadence following in the footsteps of our moral civilisation? But the Oriental question posed to the world—a world which to-day seems all too small for its answer—has not yet reached its philanthropical development, and discussions on the simple life must still be reserved for those to whom the calm of Islam is unknown.

Knowledge of the Oriental character! How often do we hear the need of this in political affairs, yet never enough. He who has it, will he ever be given free hand by his Govern-

¹ Edmond Ferry.



A STREET IN TANGIER.

ment, which certainly never seems to possess that valuable equipment itself. The desire to spring a military "coup de main" on the country, which an able French diplomat was so eager to carry out, the march of a flying column to Fez, might it not have settled the whole question in short order, since in the battle of words the Oriental must always worst us? Any military force which the Moors could assemble at the present moment could offer no serious resistance to an European force provided with artillery. Had the French minister at Fez been authorised to adopt a sharp and decisive policy in pushing his demands, would things have been worse than now . . . since still Morocco is the centre of possibilities and to-morrow and Fez still hold their problems unsolved?

Fez! When will the railway reach those mud walls, that wide bay of houses and minarets sweeping the hills apart? Is it beautiful, or strangely disappointing as some find it? Let each traveller decide. I only know that the link between Granada and Fez, between the playful and tortuous gardens of the Andalusian alcazars and the orange and citron groves which form retreats from the narrow streets of Fez, is still strong, though all the intellectual gilding has gone. To-day there is a shadow over it, as though it were doomed, this Mecca of the Magreb, where the learned preached and still preach war against the infidels; where all the mystic arts of alchemy, astronomy and divination once flourished and the women of to-day still search the flames for secrets of their monotonous future, and to which the Moors return as they leave it, having learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. It is curious to think that so close an alliance as of marriage might once have allied Fez to France in the past—in the days of Louis XIV., when the Sultan honoured that monarch by requesting the hand of his illegitimate daughter, Mdlle. de la Vallière. Such honour will never be offered again.

Yes, by every Moorish tradition Fez with its golden name,

its river-traversed palace, its fountains and Andalusian mills which know no rival in Morocco, it is said, save at Sefrou, has rare claim to beauty. No matter that sordid streets and ugly corners are as familiar a feature here as elsewhere in Morocco. It is the life of the Moors of Fez, in which some dim atavism of memory still belongs to Spain and the days of the Alhambra, which pervades this town. When the Andalusian Moors, passing miraculously all the blockades of the African frontiers, poured with a very whirlwind of fanaticism into Morocco, their revived fervour for this sacred city of the descendants of their Prophet gave them a new impetus to build, and create and perpetuate all they had lost. This wonderful city which had once risen tremblingly, at war with itself as with the world, grew more beautiful with richer palaces and fairer mosques, astonishing all with its fable. Those princes who saw that Spain was lost to Islam, endeavoured to give the same brilliancy to their civilisation in Africa, but they never succeeded completely. The numberless mosques and schools they founded drew to Fez and elsewhere a crowd of African students who contributed more, perhaps, by their numbers than their learning, to the renown of their university; but the teaching of Islam had turned in an inverse sense to the evolution of European thought;¹ it became involved in the mystic and unscientific learning of the Middle Ages which had now passed away, nor has the life and mind of Islam in Morocco changed since then. A scholastic narrowness from which no great savant could extricate himself characterised its Moorish culture. Life and thought contracted together into a hopeless intolerance, and Moorish intellectuality, which had for so long lit up the intense gloom of mediæval mysticism, shrivelled away for ever. To-day the University of El-garouiyin, with its carelessly-kept library, is frequented only by poor students and strangers

¹ *Une Ville de l'Islam Fès.* Henri Gaillard.



THE MINARET OF THE GREAT MOSQUE OF TANGIER.



THE PRISON AT TANGIER.

to the town who seek there food and lodging. As for the Moorish women of to-day, they are little cultured. A large number know not how to read or write. Some, through ignorance, abstain from even saying their prayers. Yet in this city, so distinctly of the Arab past, there is a faint aroma of the old status of women, of little private schools for girls, of broidery classes; not the beginning of progress, only its tag end. The harem life is rarer, polygamy tends towards disappearance, there is in fact a higher form of family social life than elsewhere, the result of economy, however, rather than morality. This family existence may also be the result of the peculiar feeling of citizenship which Fez exercises over its inhabitants, and which for many generations has held the same groups together, marrying and intermarrying. It would seem to be a direct influence of the Moors of Andalusia, the descendants of whom are still proud of their origin, and the Sultan himself counts two among his ministers whose ancestors migrated from Granada. But the calm proud existence of Fez which has passed with a refined monotony for so long amidst its houses and gardens, and where from the cradle to the grave the days pass gently, sad or gay as the divine will ordains,¹ is gradually losing its mystery. After hiding mystically for centuries, its veil has been wrenched aside till, more legentic in its beauty, alas! than ever, snapshot and pencil and diplomatic incursion have played alike on squalor and departed glory.

The Moors chased from Spain were the most terrible expounders of Islam, as they are to-day. They seem to preserve a lasting and bitter rancour against all the races of Europe, a rancour for the curse of decadence which their enforced emigra-



MOORISH LADY

¹ *Le Maroc d'aujourd'hui.* Eugène Aubin.

tion brought in its wake. No new conquests, no fresh glory, no real pulse of civilisation, save in its decline, was left them. The Moorish legend in Spain remained as their old impetus to patriotism, to art and literature, for all time, but they themselves were lost in the gulf of their own race and its inherent tyranny. In Spain, Velasquez was to paint their flight, Lope de Vega had sung of it, great bards had unsheathed their swords against them. Their very echo in Andalusia was as a breeze over plains, echoing for ever the influence of the East over the West. But what influence had the West exercised over the Moors which was to defy time and change? The Spaniards have never profoundly influenced any other race in the world, save in details. Certainly not the Moors. What impression have the Spaniards left in Morocco to compare to that of the Moors in Spain? Spanish Christians from the fourteenth century were accorded protection throughout the Berber empire, and a Christian colony of Catalonians and Aragonese established themselves at Tlemcen, yet Tlemcen was never other than a centre of Islamic culture. If it is impossible to deny that the influence of the Middle Ages—an entirely western influence in its intellectual sense—affected the Moors of Andalusia in many ways, it was but skin deep. Only for a while had the chivalry of Moor and Christian confounded themselves in a common ideal; only for a while could the summing up of the mediæval spirit, as Ruskin has perfectly conceived it, include Saracen and European alike:

“First, a king who was the best knight in his kingdom, and on whose swordstrokes hung the fate of his kingdom.

“Secondly, a monk who has been trained from youth in greater hardships than any soldier, and had learnt to desire no other life than one of hardship.

“And lastly, a craftsman absolutely master of his craft, and taking such pride in the exercise of it as all healthy souls take in putting forth their personal powers.



TANGIER FROM THE MARKET-PLACE.

"These three kind of persons, I repeat, we have to conceive before we can understand any single event of the Middle Ages. For all that was enduring in them was done by men such as these."

All these qualities the Moors could count their own in Spain, and all they lost in Africa, and if any doubt is entertained as to the depth of Moorish culture in Andalusia, the story of their rapid decline in Morocco confirms it. So completely artificial was that exquisite civilisation of Granada, that after centuries of western influence it had failed to tone down a single violent passion of their race. From the end of the Middle Ages, the Musulman evolution ceased almost as suddenly as it had begun. Its reason for existing seemed gone, it had found its status politically and socially, its patriarchal administration, its cohesion. The Koran was an open book, all its secrets had been interpreted, and for a while, a brief but glorious period, what remained of the Mohamedan empire stood still, as though awaiting a fresh impulse. That impulse came as a protest from Europe, so violent that it drove all the vivid but unlasting life of Islam from the peninsula, back to the burning shores of Africa. Here, had Berber and Arab sought cohesion, they could have revenged themselves easily on the Christian armies in their wake. But the energy of the past had gone, and none to-day can tell why.

A large number of exiles, many of whom had shone in the brilliant court of Granada, found their way instinctively to the sacred spot where an intellectual centre had long existed. Never was capital so well situated in regard to its own safety rather than to the safety of the country, so luxuriously enveloped in its own privacy, broken only by the sounds of running water dear to Arab and Moor alike; nor so sheltered from all the movement of commercial activity or strategical importance which would have characterised such sites as Rabat or Salé. Morocco,

wonderful country that it is, can afford to dispense with commerce, and this fact and the story of its freedom from commercial activity before the eighteenth century, has no doubt had much to do with its obstinate independence in the face of other powers. Morocco must give up her riches. Perhaps the West will appreciate them more than Morocco can herself. In these days merely ancestral right to possess any portion of the globe is a title no longer admitted. But only by the most primitive weapons do the Moors combat this truth. That is the difficulty, for our own weapons are over complicated for diplomatic fencing with a people at once so primitive, yet so sophisticated.



Snake Charms in Morocco.



IN THE JEWISH QUARTER, TANGIER.

CHAPTER X

Algeria

"Nous ne rêvons pas d'un Eldorado. Nous ne sommes pas les éternels émigrants qui dessinent au bord de la mer mystérieuse et sur le sable d'un rivage détesté les épures d'un vaisseau de fuite. Nous sommes des traditionalistes."

Les Amitiés Françaises. BARRÈS.

"Pays de la Lune," the French call it, for every undulation of mountain, plain and valley, of desert or oasis, are found in it ; the extremes of fertility and barren waste, of cold and intense heat, of town or Homeric life. One might almost add that the extremes of suggestive beauty or disappointing landscape are here as well. The south is as beautiful, the mountainous districts are as varied and grand as Algiers itself is unsatisfying and barren of the poetry of sentiment. However fair the day, the stretches of deep, green hillside clothed with the forestry which marks the coloniser's hand ; the distant sea so dark against the white buildings, remain curiously unresponsive. Gardens of luxuriant verdure smile above the busy town, but no Muse has ever cast her shadow beneath the leafage. There are Moorish gardens about the slopes where a breath other than of sun-warmed flowers and perfumed air is sought in vain, for echo and zephyr alike have passed them over. Algiers is no city of poetic past or present, and it might safely be affirmed that its future belongs still more to the sphere of the useful than to the ideal. There is, too, about the atmosphere of Algiers itself that most unpardonable of characteristics—provincialism—a provincialism profoundly uninspired, incapable of producing the very ghost of any such psychological study as of a *Madame Bovary*.

It would seem as though countries and not people were responsible for the poetic vein, and though the wonderful desert still awaits its great hymn, there is little doubt but that it will find voice some day ; but who could sing a hymn to the gods within radius of this cosmopolitan and unbeautiful town, from which even the Arab's rhythmic droning has died away ? Even the artistic life of Algiers, which since Fromentin's day has been unwillingly advancing towards a national Villa Medici in its midst, is more forced than natural, and men like Rochegrosse or Dinot are more influenced by vanishing types than by the landscape. Orientalism, which to the European is so full of inspiration, is not found in this country as it is in Morocco, or Tunis or Egypt, save in restricted areas. The landscape of Algeria is cosmopolitan, and Spaniard or Italian, Frenchman or even Swiss, all find in it an echo of their own lands, as the very natives themselves echo every race. This does not make Algeria less wonderful and rich in natural contrasts, but it does make it too complicated for perfect expression, and poet and artist alike are rather confused by vivid impressions than inspired by any individual loveliness.

In Algiers the Oriental character has almost completely disappeared. Great boulevards, many-storied houses, handsome shop-windows, squares in the French style, all is "de notre pays," rather than subservient to the natural instinct of the spot. The characteristic French *café* life, too, flourishes here, all the more naturally perhaps, since from this coast came, very probably, the fashion of sipping coffee in regular coffee houses ; a fashion which early in the eighteenth century had reached such a pitch in Paris that as many as a dozen *cafés* might be counted in a single street, perfuming the air with the aromatic sweetness of

" . . . cette liqueur si chère

Qui manquait à Virgile et qu'adora Voltaire."

The excessive use of it by the Arabs may account for the fact that they are almost absolutely free from the ills of melancholy,



FOUNTAIN IN COURTYARD OF THE GREAT MOSQUE, ALGIER.

for as far back as the seventeenth century in France was not coffee esteemed a sovereign preventative against sadness, an excellent remedy to chase away black melancholy? But the Oriental qualities of this cheerful beverage are no longer found there as of old, and even in Algiers it is hard to find the real thing, though



SADDLING THE CAID'S HORSE, ALGERIA.

the quantity of Turkish coffee-pots for sale shows a certain interest in encouraging its use.

What a curious crowd of nationalities are seen in this typical capital of a colony, the only town in Africa where the French are in the majority and count more than double the percentage of natives. Up the queer Italian-looking street leading to the famous Kasbah—which, by the bye, must have fallen not because of a “coup d'éventail,” since the use of the fan is unknown to the Arabs, but probably with the blow of some fly-whisk of silver incrustated with coral—are seen swarms of Moors, Nubians, Creoles, Alsatians, Italians, Spaniards and Jews. The last are, of course,

accused of being overgiven to commerce, but if there is a spot in the world where commerce and bartering are as the breath of life to all classes and races, it is this where the artistic and intellectual *milieux* are as tiny oases in the midst of a vast market, and if it be a crime to collect wealth by means fair or foul, the criminals are not only found among the Hebrew nationality. Every language is heard, and it can in truth be said of Algiers as of Tunis in the days of Salammbo : "Il y avait là des hommes de toutes les nations." Even the absence of Turks is replaced by the vanishing half-Turk, half-native hybrid.

But this collection of human opposites does not impress one very favourably, and the old Arab maxim which says, "Ask no questions on a man's character ; watch with whom he walks, for each man contaminates his neighbour," would be somewhat confusing here. During the early years of the French occupation the emigrants who poured into Algeria with a feverish greed as to some Eldorado, were little else than adventurers, shady characters, and even worthless officials, whose interests were entirely their own, till for a while this great city was looked upon askance as one of idle pleasure rather than of serious growth. Colonising has to fight, as best it can, such legacies of human riffraff, grafted on to the new colony by the too-willing mother country. But in the case of Algeria, not only the riffraff of France but that of Spain as well considered the soil as its own, and though with time the Spaniards earned for themselves a certain amount of consideration, as forming a useful branch of the community, in the capital itself they undoubtedly had a deteriorating effect upon both French and natives. For some mysterious reason, too, the effect produced by Christian races upon the native character in Africa seems always unsatisfactory. Our civilisation has not genuinely bettered the Arab so far, and in Algeria he has even retrograded morally since the days of the conquest. The effect of foreign influence upon him in Egypt,



THE MEDERSA, ALGIERS.

though seemingly a parallel case, is not quite the same. Foreign colonisation in that monotonous country cannot profoundly change a people, the peculiar conditions of whose desert home must always produce the same type of human existence and native isolation. New influences along the banks of the Nile have lessened the historic misery of existence without affecting the mode of life or thought, and the Arabs of to-day live out their lives there much as they did under the Fatimites. But Algeria is a country far more versatile than Egypt, and since the occupation the Arab has found himself obliged to conspire with the French in a totally new development of his home, even of his desert home which has proved more adaptable to change than was at first believed. So the contact between colonists and natives is necessarily far closer in Algeria than in Egypt, and this makes the Algerian native worthy of a more psychological study than he has hitherto been vouchsafed, while the colonising of his country becomes more complicated and was, during the first fifty years, necessarily more cruel.

There are strange workings in the mingled races of this country which for the first time is being colonised not by emigrants as in the past, but by colonisers who, good, bad or indifferent, have absolutely implanted themselves in the land. A French writer of to-day has endeavoured in a powerful romance to work out the effects of African climate on certain races, and in especial on the Spaniard who often seems "énivré par l'abondance de l'Afrique, emporté par l'ardeur de la terre,"¹ his blood burnt, as it were by the sun. But the effect of French blood upon the Algerian Arab will be a yet more interesting study in the near future. Never, perhaps, has colonising been carried out in a more original spirit than to-day in Algeria, for that spirit is one of assimilation, and whatever errors are committed in its eternal policy are as often as not made in the effort

¹ *Le Sang des Races.* Bertrand.

to assimilate the French with native life. From the first the idea of possible extermination never entered into the violent struggles of fifty years ago, though the early scenes of bloodshed seemed to point that way. On the contrary, the French have undertaken to solve the problem of African colonisation by an assimilation which will in time count so many millions more "Frenchmen" in the world than would otherwise be possible, and the rapid increase of the native population is encouraged as much as the decrease of that of France is deplored. Interesting indeed would it be if we could see athwart the two or three generations of hybrids, into what the Franco-Arab Algerian will develop.

So far, though with all praise for the tremendous problem undertaken, one may ask oneself whether the Arab does not only change to his disadvantage? With a decreasing fanaticism he certainly seems to sacrifice much of his native pride and energy, and fanaticism, terrible enemy to progress though it be, would seem to be rather an Arab virtue than otherwise. Certainly the natives of Morocco or Tunis, ferociously fanatical as they are, seem nevertheless finer types of an independent and proud people than are found here, and it is difficult not to compare them somewhat curiously with their town brothers of this country, whose mosques are desecrated, and who watch the infidel striding through them with a profound indifference or a lazy insolence.

However well assimilation between the French and their native subjects may answer in the long run, it should be kept distinct from any false sentiment; but there was a moment when the French had a vain ideal in their colonising quite distinct from any we may have in ours. They believed in "loving" the native. Such an idea had never entered into the English attitude towards a conquered race, nor as far as history tells us, did it ever affect the treatment of such in the past. The effort was certainly never made by Roman, or Vandal, or Arab



VIEW OF ALGIERS FROM MUSTAPHA SUPERIEUR.

himself, though the last *did* come clothed as liberator from the Roman yoke. Justice is the only feeling that the native heart feels from outside, and in the long run that stern and even bitter form of sentiment will touch the only chord that can vibrate beneath the touch of a conquering hand. So, what was written of the conquest in Algeria during those romantic days of Fromentin and George Sand, was always written in a spirit of sentiment which cast a rainbow over the cold douche of policy, while the active colonising itself was carried out in a very different spirit, and such men as Rovigo were never held in check in their treatment of the natives by the ghost of an ideal. The last of those sacred words of France—Fraternity—has been found inseparable from its trio and as equally incomprehensible to the Arab mind as the two first are to the mind of the old *régime*. No Frenchman, however enthusiastic, would dream of singing to-day the old song,—

“ Mes amis, mes amis,
Soyons de notre pays,
Oui, soyons de notre pays ; ”

rather would he force himself to say, “ Adieu, charmant pays de France,” and graft himself as well as he can upon a foreign shore. So in reading the voluminous literature on Algeria of three decades ago, written during the very period when the iron hand of militarism was heaviest upon the natives, a false enthusiasm is found running through the views of that time, belonging, naturally perhaps, to what has been termed the period of childhood in Algeria, the period when the events of the conquest present a stirring confusion of success and languid indecision, of treachery and broken treaties, friendly exchange of words and sudden blows, all the lights and shades, in fact, of a too-youthful struggle which history now makes light of or carefully hides away within the dark pages of old *régimes* which are judged

capable of all atrocities. That early enthusiasm of the French, if it has not disappeared, has certainly changed ; it belongs to the Romantic spirit which penetrated into all the life of France at that time, even into their colonising, stained though that was with scenes of cruelty, and giving the whole story of that time as



A NATIVE TYPE, ALGERIA.

it has come down to us, something at once fantastic and uncertain, desultory, violent with a kind of one-sided, crusading fanaticism, poetic with the sentiment of the Patrie which is now dead, illusive with the Utopia of a Fraternity which died before it ever stretched wings.

But, sentiment or hard reality apart, there was indeed a fine savour of the Middle Ages about the Algerian conquest, darkened with acts of appalling brutality but lit up with heroic courage on either side ; Arab and European alike exhibiting that wild mixture of

dauntlessness and unchivalric treachery which marked the crusading days. Well may the dramatic sight of Constantine, that city of the air, as the Arabs of the Middle Ages called it, awaken memories of the historic sieges of which it was once the theatre. On three sides it hangs over a formidable ravine echoing with the roar of the great river which only calms its rage in a distant valley bordered with orange groves and scarlet pomegranate flowers, as though worn out with its struggle with Nature. "C'est la résidence du Diable," exclaimed a French officer as he confronted those terrible heights before the final onslaught. No wonder that a certain gloom hangs over this

town of narrow streets and bold outlines, a wild gloomy charm such as must cling by all the rights of tradition over a fortress city tingling with scenes of bloodshed and yet legentic with the calm pride of a classic age, the home of one who could influence such a mind as that of Marcus Aurelius.

There are battle-fields which are disappointing to the student of history, so tame and peaceful does the present scene seem in comparison with some tragic story. But here for once, the "mise en scène" of the drama seems still terrible in its frowning reality, filling the mind with admiration of the courage which could confront it without flinching. In their final assault the French had to meet not only a natural enemy of perpendicular rock and almost impassable roads over which the rain had lately been driving, as it had once fallen in torrents when poor Choiseul led his forlorn hope up to the walls, but a gallant foe as well. The Bey Ahmed was a man of extraordinary energy and magnetic influence on his Kabyle and Turkish followers, sustained, too, to the last by the hope of Turkish reinforcement. But the French army was not likely to be beaten twice on the same spot nor daunted by the burning villages around, the shrieking women on the terraces, the hidden foe. Into those narrow streets with barred windows, from which came a ceaseless fire, down into which fell the ruined walls of the houses, crushing and wounding men and officers beneath the *débris*, Combe took the place of Lamoricière, who was blinded with a terrific explosion of powder magazines; the ladders were flung up against the walls, and the town pierced. In the distance, along the mountain height in the direction of the south, Ahmed was seen galloping away under the fresh morning sun; the cords by which the remnant of the garrison and inhabitants had sought to escape over the rocks, broke, and plunged them into the ravine. The town was taken.

The old prophecy that the Christians would return at a certain date—between ten and twelve on a Friday morning—for which reason the inhabitants always carefully locked their town

gates during those hours, was curiously fulfilled at the taking of Constantine, which fell upon a Friday morning at ten o'clock.¹

With the memory of this siege comes that of the Arab Abd-el-Kadir, and who can deny that there was something fine about the personality of this man, a mingling of the truest warlike spirit with the religious pride of the desert, a kind of Algerian Jugurtha, holding back the tide of the inevitable with unwavering courage. He bore a charmed name, that of the patron saint of all unfortunates, the prince among marabouts, and it was in a chapel at Baghdad, consecrated to that holy man, that one day in 1828, so runs the legend, while the youth was praying with his father, the saint appeared to him under the guise of a negro, holding in his hand three oranges. "Where is the Sultan of the West?" asked the disguised saint, "these oranges are for him." "We have no sultan among us," answered the father. "You will soon have one," said the negro, and placing the three oranges in the young man's hands he vanished. Three years later Abd-el-Kadir was preaching the Holy War against the French, and with 10,000 men vainly besieging Oran.

No common adventurer was this Arab leader, but a man of education, a traveller who had seen Egypt and the Orient, though always "*à travers Islam*." Skilled in all manly exercises, hallowed with a double pilgrimage to Mecca, distinguished by his piety and zeal, a splendid horseman who, like the Numides of old, owed half his success to his steed—

"On his back Death Himself cannot touch me,
He fears the sound of his hoof"—

he had, it is said, all the elegant dignity of the Arab aristocrat with the austere mind of a saint. But though he rose on the horizon at a moment when Oran, in complete anarchy, belonged neither to France or to Morocco, he showed the limitations of

¹ *Algérie*. Par Rozet et Carette.



ENTRANCE TO THE MOSQUE OF SIDI, ABD-ER-RAHMAN.

his race in inventing nothing new to meet such an opening for ambition, but only endeavoured to correct the Turkish form of government that had gone before. His force and his weakness alike lay in his profound *mépris* for all that the infidel could teach, and the French, after having to their cost despised him, have ended by praising him too much.

The description of Abd-el-Kadir by the Duc d'Aumale after his capture brings this finest of Algerian patriots clearly before us : —“ Abd-el-Kadir is a man of about forty. His face is intelligent, his eyes, large and black, have a severe and imperious expression. His complexion is tan-coloured ; his face thinned without being too long ; his black beard is thick and ends in a point. The whole of his person is austere and recalls the traditional figure of Christ. His voice is grave and sonorous ; his height, above the medium, seems robust and well knit. He wears a black burnous over two white ones, with yellow maroccan boots, the most simple of costumes.” It is the description of a bold warrior whose day was over. Indeed, had not prophecy declared long before how the struggle would end, and had not one Hadji Aïca foretold all in his book of verses :—

“An army of Christians under God’s protection advances towards us. Algiers—superb Algiers, has been for two centuries under the tyranny of the Turks. An innumerable army arrives. The French and the Spanish cross the sea. Algiers falls into the hands of the Christians. France comes to gather the harvest in our fields. . . .”¹

Those fields were stained with blood. But for all the acts which rendered the name of France odious during the early years of the Algerian occupation the Republic to-day accuses the First Empire, pointing out that the names covering it with such odium were all borne by those of the Imperial Service. Boyer, nicknamed Peter the Cruel, was an old officer of the days of the Empire. The Duc de Rovigo, whose acts of cruelty only

¹ *Algérie.* Par Rozet et Carette.

an Empire, it is said, could have condoned, was chief of the Imperial police. Pélissier, who ten years after his act of unparalleled brutality in Algeria was made Marshal of France and then first governor of the colony—such men as those go down to history not only as men of unprincipled savagery, but as victims of their country's monarchical errors. Even the



ALGERIAN WOMAN.

courageous Bugeaud only lived down the fact that he had soldiered under Napoleon, and all his adventurous and stormy past, by proving himself not unworthy of the honours he received, till the "Père Bugeaud" became for the Algerian army what the "Petit Caporal" had been for the great army of France. The verdict of the Republic upon those days is a severe one. Empires produce easily great villains and great patriots. It remains still for the Republic to prove whether it, too, can do both.

In no country, not even in France itself, is the impress of Bonapartism so powerful as here. Its overwhelming force seems to have destroyed much of the freedom of individual ambition, to have hall-marked the inhabitants with the brand of officialdom, the red ribbon which marks the Frenchman's willing servitude, not his freedom. If there is no place in such a chapter as this for ponderings on the Gallic mind and the strange transformation made by a new form of government on a people's personality, impossible not to regret that every race, even one so brilliantly gifted and capable as the French, seems to find sooner or later its Koran, political, religious, social or artistic—something crystallising and wing-clipping. The leavening-out forces of a Republic which in France itself finds a resisting yeast in the not yet merely historic pride of the *noblesse*, have full sway here, and the

Republican atmosphere sits somewhat heavily on this aristocratic Arab and Turkish centre.

It is for this reason that there is no happy field in Algeria for individual ambition or policy, though the very men splendidly able to work out their own lines are there, since at home or abroad there is no Frenchman, only Frenchmen.

“Vieux soldats de plomb que nous sommes,
 Au cordeau nous alignant tous,
 Si des rangs sortent quelques hommes,
 Tous nous crions ; à bas les fous ;
 On les persécute, on les tue,
 Sauf, après un lent examen,
 A leur dresser une statue
 Pour la gloire du genre humain.”¹

So it well befits a Republic worked out on these lines to see the name of its most colourless president inscribed in letters of gold on a marble slab near the proud Roman bridge of Al-Kantara.

The vast field for manœuvres, the great military *école* for the French soldier in Algeria is, perhaps, a more interesting study to many than its internal policy and the red tape of its government. For whatever military action is taken by France in the near future will be enormously affected by what this school has taught. Should France be called upon to take aggressive action in Morocco, the campaign would very probably be finished far more promptly than the wars that dragged on intermittently in the days of the last Empire.* Indeed it is no secret in France that the insurrection instigated by the Kabyle sheik Si-Hamed, in 1868, was allowed to run on by the

¹ Béranger.

* According to the Governor-General, M. Jonnart, the Army of Occupation has never been in a state of greater efficiency than to-day.

indisposition of the army to put an end to a state of things which brought them promotion and an opportunity of training and exercising their men in actual warfare, of which the risk of serious loss or disaster was not great, and in which they hoped to secure a highly-trained army of veterans. But they reckoned without their host, as the events proved. The Ecole d'Algerie proved itself a failure when its methods were employed against the German army. Accustomed to deal with an enemy whose military equipment was of an inferior order to their own, the officers of the Algerian School became insensibly prone to methods of warfare impossible before an European force. The frontal attack, unsupported by flanking movements, the bayonet charge were their tactics, and when met by the profounder strategy of the German army proved inefficacious. A Memoir published the other day by a French officer present at the battle of Sedan,¹ describes how General de Wimpfen, "who had just returned from Algeria," took over the command at that battle. He paid no attention to Ducrot's warnings that the German army was slowly but surely enveloping his forces, insisting upon making unsupported counter attacks, vainly attempting to break the circle. Nor did he realise the seriousness of his position until too late to extricate himself. The guerilla warfare, then, of 1868, had its share in turning the tide in favour of Germany.

There is very little of Algeria which is not now opened up to the tourist who is willing to rough it without change of clothes for a few weeks, and to count on the hospitality of the Arabised Berber sheiks to whom, by the bye, it seems more courteous *not* to present a letter of introduction from the military authorities which robs that hospitality of all charm. Divided into three parallel divisions, each running inland from the sea over mountain ridges toward the desert, each province of Algeria

¹ *Mes Souvenirs*. Par le General Baron Favero de Kerbrech. 1905.



VILLA DJENAN EL MUFTI, ALGIERS.

has its own "point de départ," from which by rail and then by the aid of sturdy but ignoble-looking mules the whole country can be traversed. From Biskra, the expedition to the great range of the Aures can be made thus, across arid plains—though not too arid for terrible swarms of locusts to find their way—past fair oases and squalid settlements, over hard tracks and rocky paths towards the wild ravines of the mountainous district. Mountain after mountain ridge is traversed, valley after valley, each wilder and more solitary, more inhumanly silent than the one before, through cold to torrid zone, till a lovely vegetation is at last reached; forests of athletic cedars as proud as those that fell beneath the destructive hand of Solomon; and date-palms, the very fruit-stones of which are chewed by enduring teeth and humble appetite. The Berbers of these heights are of the same race as those of the Kabyle country, yet absolutely estranged from them. Sharing the same customs, understanding each other's language in spite of some linguistic divergencies, the natural barriers of this strange country have divided them as though by an impassable ocean. The secret of independence without the secret of forming a nation has always distinguished them, true natives of a mountainous land, preserving in their mountain fastnesses, on the ridges of which, like nobles of the Middle Ages, they build their castles, the last traditions of their sturdy past. Whatever civilisation may have been theirs long ago in their unarabised condition, nothing remains of it now save a few traces of funereal monumentation. They seem to



COSTUME OF ALGERIAN WOMEN.

have qualities rather than gifts; a strange mixture of qualities, the warlike and semi-nomad, with the sedentary and pastoral. If the Arab remains faithful to the old Mohamedan precept, "Where enters the plough, there enters shame also," the Berber is not ashamed to show his natural love of the earth and its seasons. Garbed in rough material of his own manufacture, the gun he has himself turned out upon his shoulder, he can sow his fields, watch his bee-hives, eat the humblest fare, dispense with the most rudimentary forms of cleanliness, and yet try his hand at the very arts which indicate taste and a certain refinement. These rude people have always shown genuine taste for ornament, excelling in its manufacture as the Arabs never have. The fact that their women are neither shut up nor veiled has encouraged the wearing of fantastic jewellery, and with silver, enamel and coral, and a few ill-shaped pearls, they turn out a strongly characteristic work. Not unlike the ruder peasant jewellery of Italy, the Berber art may, like it, have been influenced by the Orient, but no Arab influence has ever affected the Berber workmanship and in it no geometrical designs are ever found.

An interesting suggestion has been made as a means of preserving the Kabyle jewellery from suffering through the bad or ignorant taste of foreigners to which the Berber to-day is only too eager to pander. It is suggested that instead of buying direct from the Kabyle women who purposely load themselves with an inferior quality of ornament, despoiling their wrists, arms and ankles to every bidder, the purchaser should apply directly to a section of the Algerian Museum, devoted to collecting only the best specimens for sale—those, for instance, turned out by the Beni-Yenni tribe. The same practice, indeed, is followed in a more serious way with the "finds" of Egypt in the Cairo Museum.

We know that the Kabyle jewellery exhibited in the Paris Exhibition of 1900 was entirely pseudo-Arab, manufactured in

Paris itself and out of the cheapest materials. That no genuine specimens reach the foreign market is, of course, untrue, but rarely do the best examples. The Berber is more adaptable than inventive, and we see that when they turn out modern work, such as the enamelled spoons which had a great success some years ago, all the native character is lost. This race, which does not change easily in any of its tastes, preserving intact its own designs for its own women, and never dreaming of using other than a wooden spoon, soon learns to manufacture especially for the foreigner.

The tattooing of the women shows to what a pitch their love of ornamentation has gone ; for, however purely tribal was the heraldry of this art in the past, it is now little more than decorative, and the poorer women who cannot afford much jewellery make up for it by tattooing their faces. We look upon this form of facial decoration as singularly barbarous, yet how near were the great ladies of our most intellectual age to the same weakness. Did not the ladies of Elizabethan England patch their faces with

“ All the wandering planet’s signs,
And some of the fixed stars,”

while such a design as a coach-and-four was an especial favourite? If “*l’ame humaine n’est point partout la même*,” human weaknesses, at least, resemble each other all the world over.



VILLA CAID MAHOMED, THE RESIDENCE OF MR. HAY NEWTON, CONSUL GENERAL AT ALGIERS.

CHAPTER XI

Tunisia

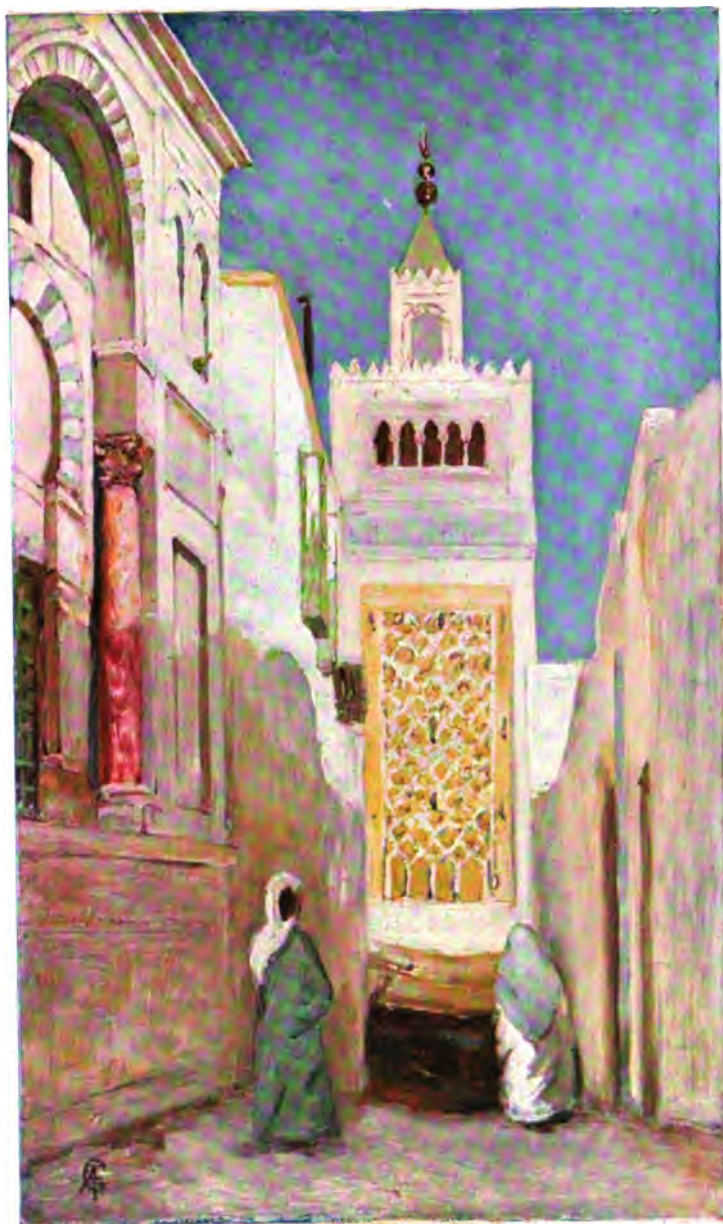
“ Là bas, sur la rive africaine,
Sous le beau ciel élyséene,
Comme il fait bon, comme on est bien ! ”—LEMAITRE.

FAR more “divinely white” than Algiers is Tunis, a town where the East and West lie side by side without blending. A far more laughing and joyous country is Tunisia than Algeria, a very rose in the fields of northern Africa. To what quality in the air, the sunlight, the people, this can be ascribed seems to matter little ; but the vast gloominess about certain parts of Algeria forms a contrast to this country where Nature’s touches are softer and more sympathetic. The grim fastnesses of Constantine or the exquisite but slightly sad beauty of Al Kantara are of quite another world than this, where even in the lonely plains between Sousa and Tunis no less than in the rich olive plantations of Sfax or the slowly-diminishing gum-forests between it and Gafsa, there is something indefinable of “bien être”—a soothing sense of peaceful and promising nature over the very fields still awaiting their olive groves, such as parts of Italy convey. Tunisia, no less than Italy, is a land of olives, and gradually the cultivation of cereals is yielding to them. In the Sahel, where twenty centuries have passed with their violent civil wars, invasions, and religious agitations, the massive roots of the ancient trees have resisted destruction and thrown out new ramifications with every spring.

If Algeria seems like some African Spain, Tunisia is the Italy that borders with an ineffable softness the stern line of the

desert. Let any lover of that land cross the dancing waves from Trapani to Tunis and wander, no matter where, even down the very boulevards of the Republic itself, where on the shop-windows every Italian inscription of a decade ago has vanished—and he will find suggestion of the people and shores behind him everywhere, no less than the living proof of their language. Often does it seem that, given a language has its influence on a people's atmosphere no less than has education, that of Italy has a distinctly poetising effect on the inhabitants of foreign lands. It is a veritable music of life which, however obstinately it may slide over the pros and cons of active problems, inspires and beautifies whatever may catch its echo. Tunis is doubly beautiful and doubly interesting to those who catch this note, a note lost in Algeria, where the echoes are broken up by the isolation of the emigrated Italian groups, and the therefore more direct influence of the French upon them. The colonisers of Tunisia to-day might be wise in not seeking to destroy this faint echo of a glorious past, and in doing away with their "idée fixe" of its political significance.

All this grace of language and character has penetrated even the Moorish parts of Tunis, mingling with it instead of jarring, imparting to the crowds of Arab and Moorish natives something at once familiar and yet distinct. "Dans le Sicilien," says Guy de Maupassant, "on trouve déjà beaucoup de l'Arabe. Il en a la gravité d'allures, bien qu'il tienne de l'Italien une grande vivacité d'esprit. Son orgueil natal, son amour des titres, la nature de sa fierté et la physionomie même de son visage le rapprochent aussi davantage de l'Espagnol et de l'Italien. Mais ce qui donne sans cesse, dès qu'on pose le pied en Sicile, l'impression de l'Orient, c'est le timbre de la voix, l'intonation nasale des crieurs des rues. . . . On la retrouve partout, la note aiguë de l'Arabe cette note qui semble descendre du front dans la gorge, tandis que, dans le Nord, elle monte de la poitrine à la bouche. Et la



A STREET IN TUNIS.

chanson traînante, monotone et douce entendue, en passant, par la porte ouverte d'une maison, est bien la même par le système et l'accent que celle chantée par le cavalier vêtu de blanc qui guide les voyageurs à travers les grands espaces nus du désert." The Italian influence has undoubtedly helped to resist the violent changes with which the French have always followed up the possession of their colonies, guided blindly by the formula dear to them of creating all over the world "de nouvelles Frances." In Tunis the Arab quarters and customs are at least much the same as what they were fifty years ago, and were it not for the absolute cleanliness and improved roads, the Beys of the past would still recognise their capital, its kaleidoscopic colours, clustered domes and minarets, and wonderful medley of humanity. The rolling gait of the Jewish women and the pale blue robes of the men, the slow shuffle of negroes, the gliding of Moorish figures, white-robed and black-masked, would pass them as of old, garbed in historic garments and still more historic rags. The life of the winding souks, Rembrandt-shadowed, miraculously flecked with light through narrow ways where

" . . . il se plait aux visions
Que dans les ruelles étroites
Machinent l'ombre et les rayons
En l'absence des lignes droites,"

is as vivid in its way as that of the souks of Cairo. And what a charm in the buying and selling of the East! Infinitely sordid as it may be, it plays upon the human character with a far more subtle touch than is ever felt in the North. The pulses of Oriental life beat as quickly though so delicately over the bargain of a jewel or garment as with love or hate, and something of this hidden fire is felt by us, all unconsciously though it be. Market life is an incident with us, in the East it means far more than that; and all round are the large dark eyes that gaze

into futurity with such calm as they stake their wit and infinite patience upon the trifles of daily needs. We really know very little of the human mind of Eastern races. There may be something grand, not merely trivial, in the whole art of buying and selling which is hidden from us. The art of exchange in wit or money can be so delicate, plays upon so many gifts in the East—poetry as well as exquisite falsity—but we have robbed it of its poetic and artistic features, and clothed it in a kind of mental sackcloth and ashes.



A NUBIAN WOMAN OF
TUNIS.

The bazars of Tunis are almost disquietingly clean—one wonders where all the historic perfumes have concentrated themselves, for even that willing scapegoat, the lake, is far too burdened to hold more within its bosom. But be this as it may, the air blows sweet and fresh through the twisting ways, and suddenly a whiff of strong sweet essence of rose indicates the vicinity of the Souk of Perfumes, where the most graceful slight of hand is carried on over bottles identical in appearance but with infinite capacities for resisting their advertised *gousse*, all so delicately contrived that again is admiration roused at the art of their commerce. A certain rich lion watches at the entrance to the markets of Tunis to-day, ready to pounce upon his prey and initiate him into Oriental tact, but pass him unnoticed, resist his offers of incomparable goods parted with as gifts rather than bargains, till, lost among the moving mass of men and donkeys, one may safely observe and wander unnoticed. But in spite of the interest it is almost terrible—this mass of opposite races, each with his own world in his face, which none else can know or understand. The Jew with his melancholy eye and drooping lip—it is not the aquiline nose which mark him here—separates himself easily from the crowd, passing softly in his white *haik*



DOORWAY OF THE GREAT MOSQUE, TUNIS.

which the rabbis of Paris have lately imposed upon him ; the Maltese, close medley of Arab and European blood ; the mass of Arab-speaking Tunisians whom it is impossible to catalogue correctly any longer ; the Bedouin, and the Moor, all pass with their strange non-seeing eyes, and if we look down, a new



A RECEIVER OF CUSTOM DUTIES.

physiognomy of feet comes toward us : shuffling sandals, slim dark children's little toes, absurd Moorish shoes with European heels, firm and sculpturesque bare-footed limbs, black boots that totter beneath the weight of Jewish women, yellow shoes trodden out of all shape, dragged along by mere force of habit, a very gallery of moving shapes these, but equally evasive, equally hard to follow. Now and then a Moorish woman passes, slowly, like a blind person, her face swathed in mournful veils. Has she just bargained over

some richly embroidered bodice, or purchased fresh supplies of orange water or jasmine? or perhaps vented the Moorish passion for pearls and found some fresh one embedded in an old jewel. Anything from 1500 to 2000 francs can be paid for the old baroque pearls of the country, and according to the Oriental legend, Moorish women brighten their pearls by giving them to a fowl to swallow, then withdrawing them through its cut throat—a decidedly less pleasant doctoring than our washing in hot water and drying in rice powder.

With the sight of the Grande Mosque opening right into the souks, comes a sudden thought—in what consists the track of the Andalusian Moors in Tunisia? What did they build, what name acquired here equal to that in Morocco or even Algiers? Vague and without brilliancy was their decadence in this country, nor can Kairowan, destroyed in part over and over again, compare in its story of fairy palaces and civilisation with that of Fez. The Mecca of Africa was founded from the first on militarism and fanaticism, never assuming as intellectual a sway under Arab as under Berber dynasties, while hundreds of Arab families preferred migrating from there to Fez, to rival in that rich centre their own mosques with those of the Andalusian Moors. It was to Fez, too, that the Moors exiled from Spain carried their reserves of wealth and their unequalled fanaticism, the last as fierce to-day as yesterday. But Kairowan, once so sacred and so unknown that even sixty years ago the mosque was believed to be in ruins, opened its portals to the infidel without a struggle. The psychology of the Arabs of Kairowan is more than usually strange; as strange and evasive as the town itself rising with its eighty-five mosques hidden within high walls, all pale and sand-coloured, amidst the sparse pallor of olives, of here and there a dusty palm with its feet, as the Arabs say, in the water, and its head in the flames of the sun. Completely Arab in form, its ancient fanaticism has been contaminated as by some mysterious force

quite other than that of persuasion or compulsion ; other, too, than might penetrate through close contact with an European population, since there are but some hundred French and Italians grouped near the entrance to the town, while the native population of Arabs, Moors, Berbers and those tribes supposed to be gipsy in origin, numbers over 23,000.

Typical and Eastern as are the towns of Tunisia, they are more Arab than Moorish. Save in a few buildings such as the



MINARET OF SIDI OKBA, KAIROWAN.

Bardo, there is but little trace of Moorish luxury of the past ; and we may well ask, Does Spain, then, not follow us here at all with Moorish tradition, with legends of fabulous wealth and gorgeous mosques as in Morocco ? Did the wave of Moorish life, exiled from the peninsula, make no effort to regain its earlier fields here, build another Fez, concentrate its light of learning in the country over which, like locusts, its Arab ancestry had passed and prayed and pillaged ? As Ferdinand's efforts to acquire an African dominion weakened, the Moors of Andalusia might well have constructed another centre where so many seeds

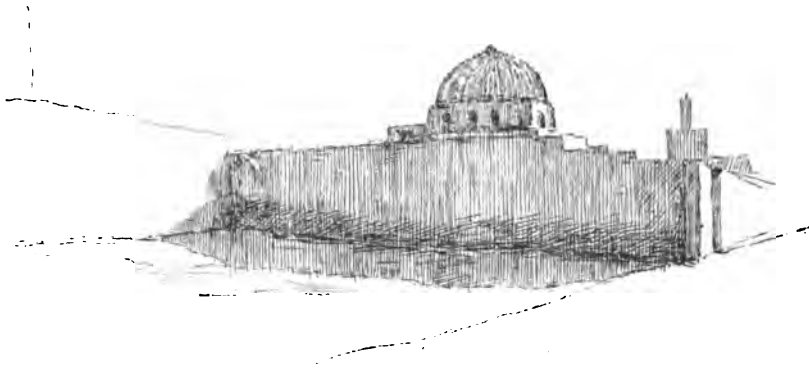
had already been sown, have brought into their African Mecca the same brilliant civilisation left behind them, and which for a while in the ninth century flourished under Berber rule in Kairowan. Still more might they have carried on the agricultural enlightenment in which they had so excelled in Spain, since this country, by every tradition at least, offered an even happier field for such than either Algeria or Morocco, and the Moorish experience was rich with centuries of experience on the peninsular. But the Arab hold on Tunisia had never been other than religious. The nomads of Arabia were content to till the plains and leave the rich mountains and forests to the Berber tribes, overlooking the fact pointed out by history that this country had always resisted colonisation in the true sense of the word through the cultivation of its lovely pastures alone. Since Roman days, Tunisia's misguiding advertisement of classic granary seems to have misled them no less than it has since misled foreign colonisers. This country of peculiar promise, still regarded as of boundless agricultural wealth, for there are yet valleys and mountains to be explored, has always demanded labour and capital such as even in their prime the Moors of Spain had never needed to expend upon the vast fields of Andalusia, and which certainly neither Roman nor Mohamedan had ventured in Africa. Wealth was sucked from their African colonies by those colonisers of the past, rather than passed into them, an error in the long run which still seems to tempt colonisers of to-day. Even in Roman days who knows whether this famous granary of Rome indicated more than the natural produce of a rich but carelessly cultivated land, since the size of the population it furnished on Italian soil is unknown, and Rome may have possessed many other granaries as well. Certainly colonising to-day is an expensive pursuit, and only the country that can spend lavishly upon its colonies is likely to hold them. Capital, not labour, seems to back up such success now.

If Algeria is just such a field for a rich country's lavish



Mosque Domes at Tunis.

expenditure as well as for assimilating European and native life, and for inculcating the French theory of "moralisation par le travail," Tunisia is doubly interesting with its added problems of emigration. French colonisation there seems assuredly doomed to be carried on by a small minority against a steadily increasing majority of Spanish, Maltese and Sicilian emigrants who themselves have long set the example of patient labour, colonisers whom France could neither imitate in numbers



A MOSQUE AT KAIROWAN.

nor rival in industry. For long the feeling in France was strong against these emigrants, and the statistics of the European population in Tunisia were held from the public for fear of rousing emotion in the country. But in 1900-1901, M. Jules Saurin, an apostle of French colonisation, roused popular feeling by his statement of facts, insisting on the importance of holding the protectorate by increasing the flow of emigration. It would seem as though the French had emigration somewhat on the brain to-day, attaching exaggerated importance to the preponderance of their own nationality in their protectorate as in their colonies. Yet in Egypt, where the native population is four times as vast, and the area far greater, the percentage of British is absurdly small, while the increasing influx into the country of Greeks and Italians

is viewed by us with profound indifference. The very fact that the French show themselves so opposed as a people to deserting their native soil points as nothing else can to the internal prosperity of their land and their subsequent carelessness in exploiting



A NATIVE GIRL OF KAIROWAN.

labour elsewhere. There is an old saying that a rich man's daughter makes the best poor man's wife, but the principle must be exactly reversed in the case of practical colonisation, for the half-starved labourer who leaves an overtaxed hovel behind him, and (in this case) risks five out of his few francs' savings to pay for his passage from Trapani to Tunis, makes the best and most enduring of settlers abroad. A Sicilian arriving in Tunisia penniless, considers himself "homme arrivé" if at the end of eight years of incessant and self-denying labour and economy he has acquired a plot of ground capable of producing a thousand francs a year. Such is the range of ambition in the emigrating classes, the lack of other significance than that of the struggle for existence, the blind instinct which has always pushed the working

families of Italy from the poverty, the errors of government, the malaria, the inertia of their own shores to those where, as in this case, their own climate seems to greet them once more with a new and kinder welcome. Yet this instinctive exploitation of small patches of ground by Italians in Tunisia has been a source of profound anxiety to France. Their own sinking of capital into large properties cannot populate the country as rapidly and as closely as do the small land-owners clustered together. Is the anxiety of the French



ENTRANCE TO THE MOSQUE OF SIDI OKBAR, KIROUAN.

misplaced or not? is a vast number of humbly-exploited farms and vineyards, never perhaps producing their full measure owing to the tenacious habit of Sicilians in ignoring modern appliances, likely to turn the tide against a people as rich and as go-ahead as the French? We should rather ask whether a country had ever acquired a colony under circumstances more favourable than that of Tunisia by France, its native population already softened by contact with a persevering and laborious race, thoroughly able from the similar conditions of their native land to understand the soil and endure the climate; a people too, whom native and French alike pull well with in Africa. If capital is peculiarly necessary in the colonising of Tunisia, Italy has shown conclusively that she had none to expend until too late. As for the importance of what is termed the demonstrating of "Italianity," in Tunisia, the French themselves recognise its intangible character.¹ Certainly the problem known as that of the "Sicilian Invasion" is an interesting one, but it seems more just in the present day to recognise the mass of *bourgeoisie* and humble workmen and their families classed under that name rather as breadwinners without leanings towards political questions than as a menace to France.

But the French Utopia remains that of a colony not merely politically but literally French in language and thought. Our colonising in small numbers, keeping the habits and customs of natives, the character of the land, in fact, fitting our system to the country instead of carrying into each the same ideas, is not theirs. While obliged in Tunisia to encourage in their own interest the Italian emigration for the colonising of their colony, they are endeavouring, as though all depended thereon, to graft their language on a vast foreign population still in close touch with its native land and continually drifting back there or receiving fresh instalments of families into their midst. It has

¹ "Le Peuplement Italien en Tunisie et en Algérie." Par Gaston Loth. 1905.

always been exceedingly difficult to precise whether or not Italian emigrants are likely to take root in a foreign land, to absent themselves in entire family groups from their country for more than one or even half a generation. If a Sicilian bids farewell to his soil for ever, his son will most probably return there, "*les liens de parenté ne se relâchent point, les mariages se combinent,*" the chain of French influence through language and school education is broken and must be soldered again elsewhere. A French writer gives as his opinion that "*sous l'influence de l'éloignement de la mère-patrie, de l'isolement des individus, l'Italien tend à s'unir au Français,*" but such cases are rare in Tunisia, for the mother country is near, the Italian emigrants live in groups, keeping noticeably together though joining freely in the national *fêtes*. Nevertheless, since the French can contribute but indirectly towards the active colonisation of this country already exploited by other nationalities, it is on the spreading of their language, the instruction of their schools, their "*influence morale*" which can be no doubt but gratefully felt by Sicilian or Maltese, that the French rely to-day for their hold on the country. They believe that a new French population can be consolidated by these means, a new nation composed of the representatives of the three Latin people bordering the shores of the Mediterranean and to whom easy terms of naturalisation are offered, instead of a colony of groups, each jealous of preserving its own character, language and national habits.

But whether the Italian settlers in Tunisia will ever be so coalesced, is for time to prove. By every right of historic association Tunisia is Roman and Berber rather than either Moorish or Turkish, and for upwards of the last hundred years, in spite of the corsairs and pirates infesting the Mediterranean before the French occupation, Italians have migrated to northern Africa in ever-increasing numbers. This instinctive emigration in the track of their ancestors has given their settlement there



THE MIRHAB IN THE MOSQUE OF SIDI OKBAR, KAIROUAN.

to-day an historic interest that the French cannot of course acquire. Not much, in a practical sense, this time-worn association. It brings the mind imperceptibly towards the abstract rather than the real, the past rather than the present, in this land which the desert thrusts towards the shores of the island of legends.

Strange is it that here in Africa much in the setting of the land's shape carries the mind irresistibly to musings on Greece; the cloud-confined background of hills glowing in rose and blue at sunset murmur less of Phenician than of Greek legend. The intimate character of the whole Mediterranean littoral has been so perfectly symbolised in the *Odyssey* and in Greek literature that anything beautiful found about its coasts takes a place naturally in the thoughts as part of the supreme song written in Hellas. If that song has lost its wonderful echo along the Algerian shores, here at least the lover of the classics will recover it, and traversing the old road from Tunis to Carthage, the sea and the crest of hills beyond awaken their responsive chords of memory, till myth and legend, Homeric or of Pindar, are with him. Over the stretches of fields flecked with the gold of spring, past the sea-lake skimmed by rosy flamingoes, a smooth interminable road leads from Tunis to Carthage. Monotonous it is, yet how gay in spite of the ghost-life of ancient sites where those two great powers aspiring to the dominion of the world met for their final bouts, the famous duels of the Punic Wars. Here the great Roman campaign was fought, the war with Jugurtha so vividly described by Sallust and which, although now usually relegated to the lumber-room or the back-waters of the instruction of youth, is one of the most interesting documents we possess on the character and methods of Roman civil and military administration under the Republic. Still more does it deserve to be read in these days of colonial enterprise and civil organisation. A

curious document indeed is it upon the character of the people who were destined to be the conquerors of the world. On perusing the extraordinary history of political corruption, of patrician narrow-mindedness and demagogic imbecility, of unrestrained military ambitions, one is tempted to doubt whether any other race in the world were ever more absolutely unprincipled in public and private life than those very Romans, the race to which we owe most of our ideas of law and constitutional government and whose military record has been the most enduring in history.

In what, then, lay the secret of the preponderance of the Roman state? Much has been written on this subject, nor is it within the scope of this work to discuss it at length, but at least one feature of Roman civilisation may arrest attention, for it bears closely on another subject, the struggle between the Moors and the Spaniards in the peninsula. The Romans were the race in antiquity who gave the family the highest place in their conception of the State, and the whole of Mediæval Europe, in a sense the offspring of the Roman Empire, was no doubt in this respect largely influenced in its social life. Wandering in Spain amongst the shadows of departed greatness of the Moors, admiration of the intelligence evinced in their work goes hand in hand with the knowledge that the people they had conquered had never shown any right to possess their miles of beautiful but unreclaimed soil. The civilising influence of the Moors, their architecture, their irrigation works, point rather to them as the people chosen by energy and intellect to turn the desert tracks of Spain into blooming gardens. Was it, then, the laxer traditions of family life inherent in the followers of Islam which proved the weak link in the chain that finally sundered and ultimately drove them back to African soil, that brought them to the state of decay, politically and socially, in which we find them to-day? The Roman family was the powerful undisputed unit of the



TOWN GATEWAY, KIROUAN.

national life, holding it together in spite of the corruption of the times and the general laxity of politics. The authority of the family head was unquestioned, extending even to power over life and death. The Roman woman was a woman indeed, in comparison to whom the Moorish wife of the harem was a brilliant doll or a slave. The belief in the sanctity of the family ties was not merely social but religious, hemmed in by every sort of right and



MOORISH CASTLE.

observance, such as the grim funeral procession in which the living members of the circle marched in solemn line, each one wearing the wax mask of a departed ancestor.

To-day Moor and Roman alike have left no shadow of their curious cross paths along our track. Nothing more wholly peaceful can be imagined than this historic route towards the sea. Is it possible that storms ever raged against such shores, ever beat under the half-constructed walls of the young city of merchants and sailors, of beautiful Carthage with its sweeping ports and proud buildings above ; that harsh waves ever cast up the wanderer from Troy upon the sands. Let those who would see this spot choose a day in spring, calm, windless, cloudless,

when the sea is clear enough to reflect in imagination the city that has so completely vanished. A day when the Mediterranean looks—what it was—a Carthaginian lake into which the impassable pillars of Hercules have sunk away till the world of the ancients seems to pass like a wonderful dream from legendic to geographical grandeur. Come to this site on some clear day when all the genius of gold which once illumined Carthage shines round us still in the passionate sunshine. But the city itself, where is it, where is its sepulchre? Passed into Nature herself, that most beautiful tomb in the world with which she seems to mark for ever an illustrious site, spending upon it something of the love bestowed upon the grave. The clear sea which once had washed against the Ionian pillars of the port, the smiling plain from which the city rose, the bright pall of grass, these envelop the beautiful spot beneath which lie the burial grounds, the skeletons that have lain ever since amidst their Greco-Egyptian jewellery, with their faces turned towards the rising sun, towards the East from which their life once hailed.

The people of Carthage have, rightly or not, obtained a reputation in history as a pre-eminently uncultured nation in the truest sense of the word. No remains of a literature have come down to us, nor is there anything whatever to show us that they were distinguished for other qualities than a talent for the organisation of commerce. Much, then, is it to be regretted that even their art, their architecture, with its convincing proof, has been lost as well. It might have borne witness, who knows, to the capacity of a people who could produce such a transcendent military genius as Hannibal; an exploring spirit such as, in other periods, has only belonged to races capable of intellectual life, and only to those races when at the summit of their powers. But our questioning awakes now not even an echo. It is only the imagination which, startled by the human contrasts of those days conjured up by memory and site, feels the confusing nothing-



SUNSET AT KAIROUAN.

ness in which such characters among man as a Hannibal, a Jugurtha, a Saint Augustine, moved and *thought*.

“ Delenda est Carthago,”

said the stern, practical Roman, and so completely has Carthage disappeared that nothing but a few broken fragments remain. No ruins, barely a stone standing upon another, but the effect is magical ; and as on some undefined terrace overlooking the smooth slopes, the gorgeous figure of Salammbo may still be evoked, dim and saffron-skinned, supplicating the secrets of the gods, her face turned towards Tunis, shadow of Carthage itself.



A STREET IN BISKRA.

CHAPTER XII

Sands of the Desert

“ Le désert . . . n'est pas décevant, lui, même ici, à ce seuil où il ne fait que commencer d'apparaître. Son immensité prime tout, agrandir tout, et, en sa présence, la mesquinerie des êtres s'oublie.”

—*Le Desert.* PIERRE LOTI.

FROM Algiers to Biskra is a day's journey. It takes us from the seashore to the shore of the desert, to one of the most exquisite of oases in the world and within touch of the most beautiful one known. Without in any way entrenching on Egyptian scenery, there is, of course, an underlying similitude between all desert borderlands, the same overlapping of silence and sound, of struggling life and eternal sleep; the same calm conflict with Nature, “où la nature semble elle-même expirer.” There are, too, the same sunsets that almost terrify with their gorgeous conflagrations, and an evening calm surpassing that of seaside or valley or mountain. The little new life of the outer world cannot change all this. The modern element is all too far from its base, mentally as well as geographically, to profoundly colour it, and streets and houses alike appear destined to rise, flicker with lights, and vanish away no less absolutely than those of the old Roman Bescera, of which not a trace remains. The mass of tourists and invalids who, in spite of a very stolid discouragement on the part of the Government, have made of Biskra a delightful hospital garden, seems a composite growth without permanent roots. The mosque-shaped casino, the hotel minaret, the confusion of Arab styles, the gardens that savour of some dim Parc Monceau, the cardinal's theatrical monument—what are all these but landmarks of our hour? Even the gardens of

Landon, so sedately and coldly artificial, shut out the wild freedom of the vegetation of the oasis and imprison a luxurious kind of fictitious Orientalism which holds aloof from the life of the spot—the life of the oasis's struggle for existence untouched by the breath of luxury.

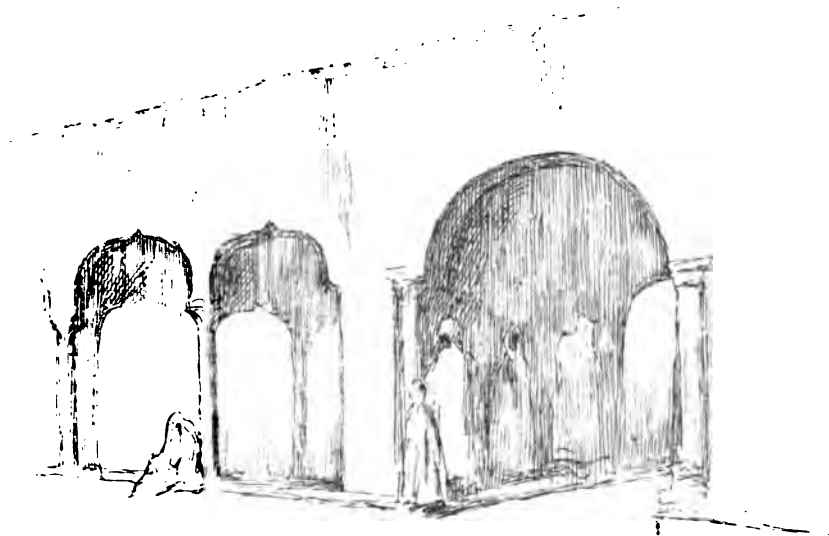
Turning into the dust-white, noiseless streets of Biskra, we find the "picturesque" element is distinctly different from that of any other place in the world. It is theatrical to such a degree that each one feels himself a spectator and leaves it as he would some theatre scene, with a mingled sense of interest, artistic fascination and, perhaps, disgust. Here in the Rue Sainte of the Arabs, where smiling visitors sit in their shady helmets sipping coffee, sketching, making desperate attempts to snapshot the "timid" beauties of the place, or watching the silent Arab loafers passing in and out among the crowd, among the magnificent horses and their riders, the donkeys and stray camels, the uniforms of the military, the blazing eyes of the native children, the languid walk of the invalids—all the chorus of the scene is before us. Here is an Arab who offers little leather goods for sale, another bearing a tray of native sweets, another with a soft grey jerboa suspended by its fragile leg, and this last it is hard to resist, for "there is none for a wonder like he, half bird, half mouse," little desert ghost with large black eyes for searching the night, hider in holes, drinking nothing, touching but a sun-dried leaf, an invisible grain of vegetable life here and there upon the sands.

But the brilliance of the scene is centred about the dancing women of Biskra, the Aulád-Náïls squatting in groups along the pavement and not, as in Cairo or Constantine, in Oriental obscurity behind the bars of windows, laughing, mysterious, indifferent. How many years have some of them been collecting the triple necklace of golden sequins without which their tribe will give them no welcome on their return to its midst, nor find them the



THE MARKET PLACE, BISKRA.

husband who asks no questions? Side by side they sit, young face by face seared with copper-coloured wrinkles. Those who genuinely hail from Laghouat, from the large and wealthy Bedouin tribe which occupies the interior, are said to be gipsy in origin, but very different are their ways of life from those of the gipsy girls of Spain or England who, profoundly careless of



COURTYARD OF THE BECH AGA'S HOUSE, BISKRA.

ideals, have a moral pride which is incorruptible. Gorgeous indeed is their dress, jewels sparkle on their brows, arms and ankles. The "great eyes of their rings" flash in the violent sunshine. Round their necks hang chains of gold pieces, their seals of the past. Here is one with dyed finger-tips pounding fresh supplies of henna in a weighty mortar, there is another, and she is really fair, half asleep against an open door, another whose magnificent headdress draws away attention from the hideous countenance beneath. These gipsies of Algeria are adepts in hypnotism, and the inkblot dropped upon the palm or back of the hand encouraged the use of zinc and copper discs for inducing

sleep which crept northwards some sixty years ago.¹ The arts they dabble in are many, and so intense and magnetic is their gaze that the "Evil Eye" of the gipsy is proverbial.

Is this scene which, like a lantern slide, is lit up for tourists during the crowded months of Biskra, and advertised in the French guide-books as "*danseuses intéressantes dans les cafés maures*"—is it really Oriental or a *pistachio* of East and West? Whatever it be, it is a blot of colour which refuses to be obliterated in the modern theatre scene of Biskra.

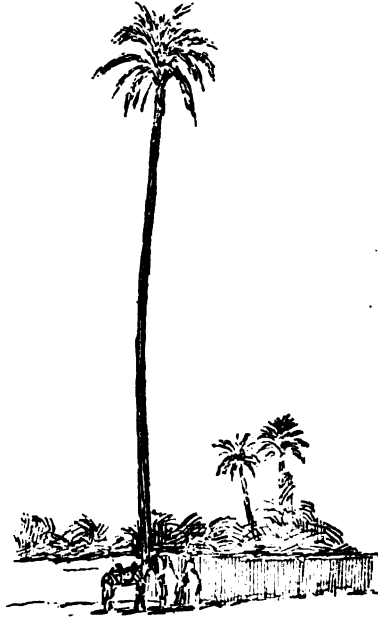
There are, too, other blots of colour that move slowly and sedately through the town on days of festival—the gorgeous palanquins of the harems, balanced on swaying camels. The name given them is hardly correct, as, properly speaking, a palanquin denotes a seat suspended by cords; they are rather travelling cages covered with cloths of every hue and bound round and round with scarves of silk or linen. The grand seigneur of the place, that erewhile wealthy Arab aristocrat whose fortune a long period of enforced hostility to strangers has cruelly undermined, is the owner of superb specimens. Within these huge wooden frames hide the women and children during the long transit from town to town, but their dark eyes peep out through the folds, and little brown fingers lift aside the curtains and gaze out with idle eagerness on the slowly passing sand dunes and the groups of palms. Eyes, I said, but how often one only, since the film of blindness claims usually one or other of even the richer children's beautiful eyes.

Turning from these spots of living colour, and the street scenes and the monotonous beat of the *darbouka*, how soft are the tints of the distant hills, how exquisitely soft and far away, yet near; if not many, nevertheless most beautiful are the walks and drives of Biskra, either past careless gardens seen through the openings of mud walls towards the old village, or towards

¹ Burton.

the shores of the desert through mimosa groves, or the picnic drive to Sidi Okba across the sand dunes. Whether the mosque there is worthy of the hot drive or not is, it seems, a matter of opinion. To some it alone would seem well worth while journeying to Biskra to see. The view from the minaret through milk-white openings, far across the 70,000 palm tops, over the miserable and tortuous streets and the whitewashed courts of the houses with dark figures crouching in their shadows, melts far away into the distances. Rising through the still air comes the buzz of the Koran from the schools below, where, among all those *rauque* voices there is not one who can make a mistake which will escape the ear of the instructor. Sidi Okba is, in spite of its apparent squalor, an important religious centre, a "Zaouïa," as it is called, of mosque, school, and tomb of founder; one of the communities of marabouts who, in spite of the religious unity of Islam, nevertheless often acquires sufficient power to rouse bitter jealousy from the Djouad or aristocratic Arabs, who accuse them of obtaining too much power and riches under the shelter of godliness. From whence arises the saying that from every Zaouïa a serpent always issues forth.

The very soul of Islam seems to hide in this little mud village and lurk within the simple but graceful mosque whose architecture is more directly of the desert than that of any other mosque in Africa. Its aloofness from the modern world is absolute, and that in spite of the desecrating feet of infidels. It is a whitewashed ruin into which the sands of the desert are



A GIANT PALM TREE NEAR SIDI OKBA.

blown, and "nothing so delights my heart as ruins in deserts, or so repels it as ruins in the circle of fashion." We often talk of finding within religious buildings the religious sentiment, but the mosque breathes forth other than religious feeling—it is a very mirror of the Arab mind, as well as of his faith. In it we see the proud seclusion, the incorruptible simplicity of his views of life, the horror of change; and wherever an old mosque has undergone restoration we may be sure it has ever been in the spirit of preserving old forms, however shorn of their rich ornamentation, down to the minutest detail.

Certainly this traditional sameness has something terrible as well as merely individual in it. All the interpretations of change are familiar to us, but the voicelessness of monotony, the dead stillness as though the breezes of life had fallen away, sometimes as in this old building, these seem to suffocate the natural restlessness within us. We realise that the Arab and his desert home are unknown quantities for the average western mind.

How much we of the West know of desert life in its psychological sense it would be hard to say, though the old delusion that the Sahara was a dead sea, monotonous and still impregnated with destructive salts, a sea of heavy sands, sterile, unwatered, silhouetted here and there by caravans like trembling waves upon the arid plain, threatened by storms more awful than even those of the open ocean—a land, in fact, cursed by Nature and dreaded by man—has evaporated like a very mirage of the desert itself. No longer does it seem to us as only

"Du sable, puis du sable !
Le desert ! noir chaos
Toujours inépuisable
En monstres en fléaux !
Ici rien ne s'arrête,
Ces monts à jaune crête,
Quand souffle la tempête
Roulent comme les flots ! "



THE HORSE OF THE BASH AGA, BISKRA.

As the ocean keeps its voice for the shore and its stillness
for the open sea,

“Gather a shell at the strewn beach
And listen at its lips. They sigh
The same desire and mystery,
The echo of the whole world's speech.”

so on the borderlands of the oases the silence of the desert is already half a song, and even the tourist from afar, worm though he be, may listen to its echo if so he will. Perhaps, even, may so feel its intoxication that penetrating into the solitudes of sand, he will return with the words of the New World's lover of Nature on his lips: “I swear to you that there are divine things more beautiful than words can tell.”

I have known several men who have fallen under the spell of Arab life in Morocco, Egypt and Algeria, all men of very different calibre of mind and whose several tastes and pursuits had little or nothing in common. Yet in each case the influence upon them has been the same. They all talk Arabic, they like to sit over camp fires in the evening listening to Arab stories or telling them; their sympathy for the Arab character is so great that they end by accepting largely the native view of life. Restless, even dissatisfied in Europe, they always hunger after the desert, a nostalgia for which clings to them no less than to the Arab himself. “La brise chaude, la brise d'Afrique, apportait à mon cœur joyeux, l'odeur du désert; l'odeur du grand continent mystérieux où l'homme du Nord ne pénètre guère. Depuis trois mois, j'errais sur le bord de ce monde profond et inconnu, sur le rivage de cette terre fantastique de l'autruche, du chameau, de la gazelle, de l'hippopotame, du gorille, de l'éléphant et du nègre. J'avais vu l'arabe galoper dans le vent, comme un drapeau qui flotte et vole et passe, j'avais couché sous la tente brune, dans la demeure vagabonde de ces oiseaux blancs du désert J'étais ivre de lumière, de fantaisie et d'espace.” These are the words of one

to whom all that was mysterious in Nature and man appealed with terrible force ; a brilliant mind that sought the mystery of the incomprehensible till lost within its night.¹ What is then the distinctive charm of this decayed civilisation of the desert sands which to the average outsider far back into antiquity has always contained so much that is repellent rather than sympathetic ? There can be no doubt that in our day this charm exists, and that the influence exercised upon the European is what might be called of a disturbing nature, tending apparently to loosen the European mind from its moorings, to imbue it with a certain impalpable scepticism, and above all with a disinclination to pursue any train of thought to its logical conclusion. Intellectual lassitude is the mental heritage of the child of the desert, and descends on all who have sojourned for long within the warm shadow of Islam. Is there not a kind of mental hypnotism in lands where all things are seemingly changeless, monotonous, unicoloured, producing only what resembles the sand itself, sand-hued gazelles, brown-skinned natives, camels invisible against the arid dunes ; where the very palm-tops rise desperately towards the sky as in a vain effort to see beyond the limitless expanses of gold to find some new note in their solitude. Do those who love the desert atmosphere love, without knowing it, its mental lifelessness as well, during the long hours on the shores or the seas of sand, hours without sadness or weariness, in a silence too universal to be golden—hours lost but never regretted ?

Yet the very essence of character in man or Nature is transformation and evolution, and Arab and desert alike are essentially changeless. As change is the law of mental life, so also metamorphosis endless and varied is the law of Nature. Nothing remains, everything is undergoing evolution. “*Le temps passe, l'eau coule, et le cœur oublie.*” What is the change, then, that we cannot see, but which must be working with infinite slowness

¹ Guy de Maupassant.



THE DESERT NEAR BISKRA

and paralysed forces within the psychology of the Arab and his terrible home? These are questions that come and go like ghosts, unanswered, skirting the mental borderland of desert wastes as we skirt the shadow of palms and the perfume of mimosa trees.

Within the shadow of palms surrounded with limpid artificial pools, spreading about them the pacific culture of fields, on some cool evening when against the red sky early bats are hallooing about one, and perhaps the cry of a lone desert bird that wears the ruff or the low croaking of frogs is heard, the desert that lies beyond our green strip of clustered life seems to approach rather than to disappear. Every pool of opalesque water becomes like a mirror in which the sands of the desert lie drowned like powdered gold. The water of the oasis is not like that of the green earth, deny it who will. Water, like air, has atmosphere, is sharply reflective or mysteriously clear. What life they have—those palm-encircled pools in which long-limbed children splash and the jars of the Soudanese women are plunged! Even as I gaze, one of the women straightens herself, balances her pitcher with superb ease, and turns dark sodden eyes towards me as full of mystery as her native mirror.

“Who are you, dusky woman, so ancient, hardly human . . .
Why wag your head, with turban bound, yellow, red and green?
Are the things so strange and marvellous you see or have seen.”

Yes, they too, are like eyes, these pools of Biskra, reflecting through the leaves of the symbolic palms the stars whose worship once rose from the midst of the Arabian desert and which long centuries have obliterated; that Sabeian adoration of stars, of Canopus shining down over the desert with which the real spirit of worship died away. There is exquisite life in them as they sparkle on the edge of the parched sands undermined with occult streams which, before the French had replaced with

modern appliances the old primitive methods, rarely yielded their waters save at the price of human life. What sacrificial solemnity must have marked these desert scenes, the dark-skinned, bare-limbed Arab, who, anointed and purified by prayer, and with words of farewell upon his lips, was lowered amidst dead silence into the depths of sand to grapple alone with the gurgling



IN THE SAHARA.

forces of Nature. No more certain "Open Sesame" than this—the successful tapping of artesian wells, and well named are the French Fountains of Peace.

But the evening falls and the shadow of the palms is cool and calm. Fitting symbol is the lovely tree of the only struggle of the desert, that struggle between life and death, not between progress and decay. If the effort of survival has absorbed the soul's existence, the palm remains the emblem of physical resistance, growing faster, so it is said, when weighed down. Nay, more than that, it is as the very emblem of all the races of Islam and the lands they conquered, as it was to the ancient pagan the



A STREET IN BISKRA.

staff of life and the God of his region. See how the feathery shadows evaporate into the night, and the dusky red of the sky is lost within them. The camels with their evening loads have passed by and all is still.

And now the ghosts of the desert steal out, though our eyes cannot detect them. But the Arab sees and feels them around him without fear. Indeed one might almost say that the desert is a very paradise for ghosts, the one spot on the earth's surface where they may wander without inspiring fear. With a kind of contempt the Arab will confess that they have worried him during his evening wandering across the lonely stretches, that figures of murdered men haunted his path, trying to lead him astray or to assume the form of some familiar friend, but they were ghosts, no notice did he take of them. He knows that, however apparently lonely is the desert, life or the semblance of life always shadows his own.

“Through the desert waste and wide,
Do I glide unespied,
As I ride, as I ride?”—

“No, never,” says the Arab.

But however pierced with light the mystery of the desert has become, the conception of its influence on the human mind has had no need to change. I cannot help thinking that wherever in the past a lack of sympathy was shown towards certain aspects of Nature, it rose from the mental restrictions of the people inhabiting them, which impressed painfully such types of mind as that of the Greeks, who filled their mountains with terrible spirits, or passed over the impressive silence of the Egyptian desert without word or remark of any kind; colonising only where the soil was imaginative, close to the sea or in lonely plains, and seeking in other lands not merely the shadow of their own landscape but the echo of its responsive spirit as well. Are not the inward forces

of vast space and silence destructive to the higher flights of the imagination? The exaltation which certain minds feel in solitude is, perhaps, never known in its highest sense save to those to whom solitude itself is rare.

The influences of Nature might be broadly divided into two categories—those of the sea and those not of the sea. Into this last mountain and desert alike may be classed, earth's two sterner because least variable aspects, and most distinct from her harmonies. Into the category of the sea enters all restless life that seeks voice, all that is full of vital longing, of profound effort or transparent calm. Under its influence human genius is stirred like the waves of the sea itself, its ambitions stimulated, its poetic consciousness inspired. But mountain fastness or desert plain teach other lessons, and eyes learn to see too far, to miss blindly the nearer details of life as with the sight of old age, and as with a voice crying, "grow old along with me."

It is but of later days since the intellectual forces of the world have become, so to speak, cosmopolitanised, and no longer confined to certain areas, that the magnificence of mountain scenery and its inspiration have ceased to inspire dread and repulsion. Some radical change in our psychology has made of them now speaking monuments of Nature's beauty, with lofty messages to every poet ; but yet it is still rarely that we can say,

" The desert, forest, cavern, breaker's foam,
Were unto him companionship. They spake
A mutual language clearer than the tome
Of his own tongue."

The desert is nevertheless beginning after numberless centuries to find a voice which can be heard through our busy and noisy day—the eloquent voice of silence. We listen to it with the same enjoyment as the perfume of a flower gives in a

city room. The hum of forest pine-tops, the whisper of Psyche in the ears of Dryads, the caves by the seashore as resonant of sound as the tiny shells that strew the beach—these have soothed men's hearts for ages past, but the silence of the desert is a new medicine for new ills. Its qualities are medicinal rather than inspiring and in spite of swarming tourist life which haunts its confines and finds them beautiful, the desert still awaits its intellectual significance, its epic poem. Does it wait in vain?

Whatever of profound avoidance we of other lands find in the expression of desert scenery, it is no less remarkable that the Arabs themselves, in spite of their native love of poesy, have never analysed it in any way in their voluminous literature. Only in the wording of their extravagant songs sung to the beauty of their gardens, the Homeric magnificence of their tent life, may be gathered the influence of contrast between oasis and desert itself. Only the enjoyment of sport, the nostalgia of separation, the mysterious contentment which desert life breathes like opium into its atmosphere, is found in all their poetry of religion, love, war, and horses, in which the Arab, seemingly oblivious of the real conditions of existence even within the oasis, represents the life there as a very paradise of exquisite delights. Curiously enough Arab poetry has a certain affinity to antique sculpture in its avoidance of all the realism of human suffering; but in their case it is an exaggeratedly deceptive language, springing not only from artistic feeling but from much the same insensibility to suffering and hardship which the Arab displays physically. For in spite of smiling vegetation and tranquil air during the lovely winter months, their garden of Eden is more than half a mirage. The Saharan summer is far too terrible to be passed over in silence. For seven out of the year's months not a drop of rain falls from the feverish clouds drifting over the whitened palm groves. There are even spots,

as in the vicinity of Touareg, where rain is said to fall but once in ten years. The very pools of water stagnate and breathe forth poison before which the nomad Arab and Berber, themselves as unfitted for sedentary life as water itself, would completely succumb were it not for the mingling of other and warmer blood, the constant intermarriage with black races. In no other country, indeed, does the blending of blood seem more natural, for in Algeria what race has ever been absolutely pure? In this great cross road between the Soudan, Europe and the East, race after race has circulated far back into antiquity, and even to-day seven distinct elements overlap. Moors and Berbers, the country's oldest inhabitants; negroes, Turks, Jews, and Koulougdis, though this last tribe restricts itself to the smallest area; and rare is it to find pure blood among any. The Berber has absorbed into his genealogical veins the vitality of all the rising and falling races of ancient times; has been classified under many names—Libian, Numidian, or Moor, Persians, Medes and Armenians have overflowed into his country, and now, half Arab, half who knows what, he still exists by infusion rather than by native resistance. So with the Arab; so perhaps with all people of the desert who require constantly renovated vitality to resist the elements of their terrible home. This is the Paradise to which the poetry of the desert turns with such flowery exaggeration, singing only to the luxurious side of its existence, the laughing sport of the gazelle, the delight in the wealth of cattle and sheep, the pride in the Arab himself who owns it all, as in the following poem of half a century ago, inspired by the temporary exile of an Arab chief from his native oasis:—

- (20) We divert ourselves with the pursuit of the soft-eyed gazelle, with loaded and echoing gun; sometimes we kill the chief of the herd. Unload thyself of thy weapons, the slave is at thy side (to bear them). Followers are at hand and watch over thy desires.



THE PALANQUIN OF THE BASH AGA, BISKRA.

- (23) The day falls. With tightened reins and active spurs we quicken our pace. The sweat of our steeds flows down to the very knees. Our tribes are indicated by one whom we leave behind; their traces form a trail over the sand. The herds of cattle are grazing. How shall I describe it? (They cover the earth) as a mist of the shadow of clouds.
- (26) Now the tent is pitched, the herds arrive, a pasturage is chosen for the swift camels; they are accompanied by a band of dashing horsemen. Now follow the litters borne by robust camels who kneel before us.
- (28) The interlaced flowers cover the plains with their designs. Cool water in a wide basin refreshes the thirsty beasts.
- (29) Whoe'er thou art that arrivest weary, thou shalt be tended with affection; milk shall be served thee, and chosen dates. Satisfy thy hunger whilst the repast is preparing, the ribs roasting and the sheep fattening. (Indicating that besides the sheep slain many more remain to point to the host's wealth.)
- (31) A couch of soft stuffs, spread within the tent, offers thee its warmth; it is enriched with cushions and coverings which will amaze thee.
- (32) He who calumniates the Arabs, delights in lies; the words of the envious are but calumnies! The Arabs, without vanity, are the adornment of the earth; they are warriors whose resentment is formidable; always are they victorious.
- (34) O Thou who art our intercessor, pure prophet, I solicit that our birthplace may be protected by Thy favour. Wilt Thou dissipate my sorrow and unite us—for I do but reclaim of Thee, Master, Sovereign as Thou art, after my exile to be reunited as was Joseph to his belongings! ¹

So, when we would seek for what depths this inland solitude has stirred within men's hearts, what part it has played in the especial significance of Nature for man, and how it has helped to

¹ Composed forty years ago and famous among all Bedouins of Central Maghrab. Trans. from "*Chants Arabes*," *Collection de Sonneck*.

fashion him before the cosmopolitan spirit of our age had added the sunrise and sunset across seas of sand to the world's list of artistic joys, it is vain to turn to where we should instinctively have done—not to the people but to the poetry of every age. Did we turn to the poets who serve as intermediary between the soul of a people and its expression, a silence, almost unbroken, would answer us back—a silence like that of the desert itself.

Is the death, then, of the desert mental as well as natural? This alone would make it terrible, however fair its borderlands, its lovely oases of palms sprung from the residue of clay from which Adam was formed, and bending exquisitely, "like a woman's head heavy with sleep." We turn to the Arab with curious questioning, the Arab who wrung new life from his sterile wastes, and who yet to-day is what he was yesterday. Has he interpreted once and for all the most terrible force of Nature, and in the herculean effort destroyed himself, since all that rises from the desert falls back ere long into its engulfment? "These Arabs," says Carlyle, "are a notable people. Their country itself is notable, the fit habitation for such a race. Savage, inaccessible rock-mountains, great grim deserts, alternating with beautiful strips of verdure; wherever water is there is greenness, beauty; odoriferous balm-shrubs, date trees, frankincense trees. Consider that wide, waste horizon of sand, empty, silent, like a sand sea dividing habitable place from habitable. You are all alone there, left alone with the universe; by day a fierce sun blazing down on it with intolerable radiance, by night the great deep heaven with its stars. Such a country is fit for a swift-handed, deep-hearted race of men."

Hear too what Renan says of the Arab's native cradle: "Dans ce monde anti-humain, pas un fruit, pas un grain de blé, pas une goutte d'eau. En revanche, nulle part ailleurs, la lumière n'est aussi intense, l'air aussi transparent, la neige aussi éblouis-



BISKRA.—OULID-NAIL WOMEN MAKING HENNA WASH.

sante. Le silence de ces solitudes terrifie ; un mot prononcé à voix basse suscite des echos étranges. Le voyageur est troublé du bruit de ses pas. C'est bien la montagne des Eløhim, avec leurs contours invisibles, leurs décevantes transparences, leurs bizarres miroitements."

It has always seemed to me that quite apart from the religious awakening of Islam, one of the most interesting features of Moorish greatness is that it was pushed into existence by a desert struggle, and that for centuries this struggle conquered the influence of the desert itself, which had always had so pronounced a depression on mental progress. That the great desert should speak at all and find language sufficiently strong to grapple with the enveloping silence belongs to the mysterious side of the workings of Nature. With the Arabs of the invasion it was the struggle between the confines of one desert and the confines of another, a civil warfare which ignited inner, not outer, fires. The illusion of breaking into it with the roar of western nations, filling it with the voices of foreign races, has ever been a mere Utopia, as in the days of the Romans, who battled with its sands and were buried beneath them.

The effect of foreign races on desert life reminds one of the effect of the desert influence in Spain. Without being kaleidoscopic, Spain has ever been absorbent of vast impressions which have sunk in from without, like heavy dews, and it is not mere suggestion that that country loses half its language when the far-off note of the desert is unknown ; so as one thought leads into another, the desert as an abstract influence in Spain strikes forcibly those who have passed directly from the peninsula to the verge of the sand sea. The terrible effect of solitude on the psychology of the Arabs is naturally powerful, but that its hidden force should have penetrated into that far-off country of Europe, that many of its strange characteristics should still be found in people and scenery alike, takes the imagination, as it were, by

storm. It fills one, too, with a curious sense of aloofness from Spanish landscape, a feeling at once of attraction and repulsion, such as steals over the mind even in the confines of the desert itself—we hardly know why. There is certainly something curiously complete in a journey through Spain and along the northern coasts of Africa ; it inscribes a sort of semicircle on the map like an old cuneiform character marking the inscription of splendid centuries.

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